ARTHUR MERVYN.

A Tale.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

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ARTHUR MERVYN.

CHAP. I.

A RUSTIC'S NARRATIVE.

THOUGH I had conſented to this ſcheme, I was conſcious that ſome hazards attended it: I was afraid of calumny, which might trouble the peace, or deſtroy the reputation of my friend; I was afraid of my own weakneſs, which might be ſeduced into an indiſcreet marriage by the charms or ſufferings of this bewitching creature; I felt that there was no price too dear to ſave her from ſlander. A fair fame is of the higheſt importance to

a young female, and the loſs of it but poorly ſupplied by the teſtimony of her own conſcience. I had reaſon for tenfold ſolicitude on this account, ſince I was her only protector and friend: hence I cherished ſome hopes that time might change her views, and ſuggeſt leſs dangerous ſchemes. Meanwhile I was to loſe no time in viſiting Malverton and Philip Hadwin.

About ten days had elapſed ſince we had deſerted Malverton:—theſe were days of ſucceſſive ſtorms, and travelling had been rendered inconvenient; the weather was now calm and clear, and, early in the morning that enſued the dialogue which I have juſt related, I ſet out on horſeback.

Honeſt Caleb was found, eating his breakfaſt, nearly in the ſpot where he had been firſt diſcovered. He anſwered my enquiries by ſaying that, two days after our departure, ſeveral men had come to the houſe, one of whom was Philip Hadwin: they had interrogated him as to the condition of the farm, and the purpoſe of his remaining on it.

William

William Hadwin they knew to have been ſome time dead; but where were the girls, his daughters?

Caleb anſwered that Suſy, the eldeſt, was likewiſe dead.

Theſe tidings excited aſtoniſhment.—"When died ſhe, and how and where was ſhe buried?"

It happened two days before; and ſhe was buried, he believed, but could not tell where.

"Not tell where! By whom then was ſhe buried?"

Really he could not tell. Some ſtrange man came there juſt as ſhe was dying:—he went to the room, and when ſhe was dead, took her away; but what he did with the body was more than he could ſay, but he had a notion that he buried it. The man ſtaid till the morning, and then went off with Lizzy, leaving him to keep houſe by himſelf. He had not ſeen either of them, nor indeed a ſingle ſoul ſince.

This was all the information that Caleb could afford the viſitants. It was ſo lame

and incredible, that they began to charge the man with falſehood, and to threaten him with legal animadverſion. Juſt then Mr. Ellis entered the houſe, and being made acquainted with the ſubject of diſcourſe, told all that he himſelf knew. He related the midnight viſit which I had paid him, explained my former ſituation in the family, and my diſappearance in September; he ſtated the advice he had given me to carry Eliza to her uncle's, and my promiſe to comply with his counſel. The uncle declared he had ſeen nothing of his niece; and Caleb added that when ſhe ſet out, ſhe took the road that led to town.

Theſe hints afforded grounds for much conjecture and ſuſpicion. Ellis now mentioned ſome intelligence that he had gathered reſpecting me in a late journey to ———. It ſeems I was the ſon of an honeſt farmer in that quarter, who married a tidy girl of a milk-maid that lived with him. My father had detected me in making ſome atrocious advances to my mother-in-law, and had turned

turned me out of doors. I did not go off, however, without rifling his drawer of ſome hundreds of dollars, which he had laid up againſt a rainy day: I was noted for ſuch pranks, and was hated by all the neighbours for my pride and lazineſs. It was eaſy, by a compariſon of circumſtances, for Ellis to aſcertain that Hadwin's ſervant, Mervyn, was the ſame againſt whom ſuch hearty charges were laid.

Previouſly to this journey he had heard of me from Hadwin, who was loud in praiſe of my diligence, ſobriety, and modeſty. For his part, he had always been cautious of giving countenance to vagrants, that came from nobody knew where, and worked their way with a plauſible tongue. He was not ſurpriſed to hear it whiſpered that Betſey Hadwin had fallen in love with the youth; and now no doubt he had perſuaded her to run away with him: the heireſs of a fine farm was a prize not to be met with every day.

Philip broke into rage at this news—ſwore that if it turned out ſo, his niece ſhould

ſtarve upon the town, and that he would take good care to balk the lad. His brother he well knew had left a will, to which he was executor, and that this will would in good time be forthcoming. After much talk, and ranſacking the houſe, and ſwearing at his truant niece, he and his company departed, charging Caleb to keep the houſe and its contents for his uſe. This was all that Caleb's memory had retained of that day's proceedings.

Curling had lately commented on the character of Philip Hadwin. This man was totally unlike his brother—was a noted brawler and bully, a tyrant to his children, a plague to his neighbours, and kept a rendezvous for drunkards and idlers, at the ſign of the Bull's Head, at ————. He was not deſtitute of parts, and was no leſs dreaded for cunning than malignity: he was covetous, and never miſſed an opportunity of overreaching his neighbour. There was no doubt that his niece's property would be embezzled, ſhould it ever come into his hands;

hands; and any power which he might obtain over her perſon, would be exerciſed to her deſtruction. His children were tainted with the diſſoluteneſs of their father; and marriage had not repaired the reputation of his daughters, or cured them of depravity. This was the man whom I now propoſed to viſit.

I ſcarcely need to ſay that the calumny of Betty Lawrence gave me no uneaſineſs: my father had no doubt been deceived, as well as my father's neighbours, by the artifices of this woman. I paſſed among them for a thief and a profligate; but their error had hitherto been harmleſs to me:—the time might come which ſhould confute the tale without my efforts; Betty ſooner or later would drop her maſk, and afford the antidote to her own poiſons, unleſs ſome new incidents ſhould occur to make me haſten the cataſtrophe.

I arrived at Hadwin's houſe: I was received with ſome attention as a gueſt. I looked among the pimpled viſages that filled

the piazza for that of the landlord; but found him in an inner apartment with two or three more, ſeated round a table. On intimating my wiſh to ſpeak with him alone, the others withdrew.

Hadwin's viſage had ſome traces of reſemblance to his brother; but the meek, placid air, pale cheeks, and ſlender form of the latter were powerfully contraſted with the bloated arrogance, imperious brow, and robuſt limbs of the former:—this man's rage was awakened by a ſtraw; it impelled him in an inſtant to oaths and buffetings, and made his life an eternal brawl. The ſooner my interview with ſuch a perſonage ſhould be at an end, the better; I therefore explained the purpoſe of my coming as fully and in as few words as poſſible.

"Your name, Sir, is Philip Hadwin. Your brother William, of Malverton, died lately, and left two daughters: the youngeſt only is now alive; and I come, commiſſioned from her to inform you that, as no will of her

her father's is extant, ſhe is preparing to adminiſter to his eſtate. As her father's brother, ſhe thought you entitled to this information."

The change which took place in the countenance of this man during this addreſs, was remarkable, but not eaſily deſcribed. His cheeks contracted a deeper crimſon, his eyes ſparkled, and his face aſſumed an expreſſion in which curioſity was mingled with rage. He bent forwards, and ſaid in a hoarſe and contemptuous tone—"Pray is your name Mervyn?"

I anſwered, without heſitation, and as if the queſtion were wholly unimportant—"Yes, my name is Mervyn."

"God damn it! You are then the damned raſcal——". (But permit me to repeat his ſpeech without the oaths, with which it was plentifully interlarded; not three words were uttered without being garniſhed with a—"God damn it! damnation! I'll be damned to hel if," and the like energetic expletives.)—"You then are the raſcal that robbed

Billy's houſe—that ran away with the fool, his daughter—perſuaded her to burn her father's will, and have the helliſh impudence to come into this houſe! But I thank you for it. I was going to look for you—you've ſaved me trouble. I'll ſettle all accounts with you here. Fair and ſoftly, my good lad!—if I don't bring you to the gallows—if I let you eſcape without ſuch a dreſſing! Damned impudence! Fellow! I've been at Malverton. I've heard of your tricks—ſo! finding the will not quite to your mind, knowing that the executor would balk your ſchemes, you threw the will into the fire—you robbed the houſe of all the caſh, and made off with the girl!—The old fellow ſaw it all, and will ſwear to the truth."

Theſe words created ſome ſurpriſe. I meant not to conceal from this man the tenor and deſtruction of the will, nor even the meaſures which his niece had taken, or intended to take. What I ſuppoſed to be unknown to him appeared to have been communicated by the talkative Caleb, whoſe mind

mind was more inquiſitive and leſs ſluggiſh than firſt appearances had led me to imagine. Inſtead of moping by the kitchen fire when Eliza and I were converſing in an upper room, it now appeared that he had reconnoitred our proceedings through ſome key-hole or crevice, and had related what he had ſeen to Hadwin.

Hadwin proceeded to exhauſt his rage in oaths and menaces: he frequently clenched his fiſt, and thruſt it in my face,—drew it back, as if to render his blow more deadly —ran over the ſame ſeries of exclamations on my impudence and villany, and talked of the gallows and the whipping-poſt—enforced each word by the epithets *damnable* and *helliſh*—cloſed each ſentence with "and be curſt to you!"

There was but one mode for me to purſue; all forcible oppoſition to a man of his ſtrength was abſurd. It was my province to make his anger confine itſelf to words, and patiently to wait till the paroxyſm ſhould end or ſubſide of itſelf. To effect this purpoſe, I

kept my ſeat, and carefully excluded from my countenance every indication of timidity and panic on the one hand, and of ſcorn and defiance on the other; my look and attitude were thoſe of a man who expected harſh words, but who entertained no ſuſpicion that blows would be inflicted.

I was indebted for my ſafety to an inflexible adherence to this medium; to have ſtrayed for a moment to either ſide would have brought upon me his blows. That he did not inſtantly reſort to violence inſpired me with courage, ſince it depended on myſelf whether food ſhould be ſupplied to his paſſion: rage muſt either increaſe or decline; and ſince it was in total want of provocation, it could not fail of gradually ſubſiding.

My demeanour was calculated to damp the flame, not only by its direct influence, but by diverting his attention from the wrongs which he had received, to the novelty of my behaviour. The diſparity in ſize and ſtrength between us was too evident to make him believe that I confided in my ſinews for

for my defence; and ſince I betrayed neither contempt nor fear, he could not but conclude that I truſted to my own integrity or to his moderation. I ſeized the firſt pauſe in his rhetoric to enforce this ſentiment.

"You are angry, Mr. Hadwin, and are loud in your threats, but they do not frighten me; they excite no apprehenſion or alarm, becauſe I know myſelf able to convince you that I have not injured you. This is an inn, and I am your gueſt; I am ſure I ſhall find better entertainment than blows. Come," continued I, ſmiling, "it is poſſible that I am not ſo miſchievous a wretch as your fancy paints me. I have no claims upon your niece but that of friendſhip; and ſhe is now in the houſe of an honeſt man, Mr. Curling, where ſhe propoſes to continue as long as it is convenient.

"It is true that your brother left a will, which his daughter burned in my preſence, becauſe ſhe dreaded the authority which that will gave you, not only over her property, but perſon: it is true that on leaving

the houſe, ſhe took away the money which was now her own, and which was neceſſary to her ſubſiſtence: it is true that I bore her company, and have left her in an honeſt man's keeping:—I am anſwerable for nothing more. As to you, I meant not to injure you; I adviſed not the burning of the will. I was a ſtranger, till after that event, to your character; I knew neither good nor ill of you; I came to tell you all this, becauſe, as Eliza's uncle, you had a right to the information."

"So, you come to tell me that ſhe burned the will, and is going to adminiſter—to what, I beſeech you?—to her father's property?—Aye, I warrant you! But take this along with you, that property is mine—land, houſe, ſtock, every thing; all is ſafe and ſnug under cover of a mortgage, to which Billy was kind enough to add a bond. One was ſued, and the other *entered up* a week ago; ſo that all is ſafe under my thumb, and the girl may whiſtle or ſtarve for me—I ſhall give myſelf no concern about the ſtrumpet.

ſtrumpet. You thought to get a prize; but damn me, you've met with your match in me—Phil. Hadwin's not ſo eaſily chouſed, I promiſe you. I intended to give you this news, and a drubbing into the bargain; but you may go, and make haſte. She burned the will, did ſhe, becauſe I was named in it—and ſent you to tell me ſo? Good ſouls! it was kind of you, and I am bound to be thankful! Take her back news of the mortgage; and as for you, leave my houſe: you may go ſcot free this time; but I pledge my word for a ſound beating when you next enter theſe doors—I'll pay it you with intereſt!—Leave my houſe, I ſay!"

"A mortgage!" ſaid I, in a low voice, and affecting not to hear his commands—"that will be ſad news for my friend. Why, Sir, you are a fortunate man. Malverton is an excellent ſpot—well watered and manured—newly and completely fenced; not a larger barn in the county; oxen, and horſes, and cows in the beſt order; I never ſet eyes on a finer orchard. By my faith, Sir, you are a fortunate

fortunate man!—But pray what have you for dinner? I am as hungry as a wolf: order me a beef-ſteak, and ſome potation or other. The bottle there—it is cider, I take it; pray puſh it to this ſide."—Saying this, I ſtretched out my hand towards the bottle which ſtood before him.

I confided in the power of a fearleſs and ſedate manner. Methought that as anger was the food of anger, it muſt unavoidably ſubſide in a conteſt with equability. This opinion was intuitive, rather than the product of experience, and perhaps I gave no proof of my ſagacity in hazarding my ſafety on its truth. Hadwin's character made him dreaded and obeyed by all: he had been accuſtomed to ready and tremulous ſubmiſſion from men far more brawny and robuſt than I was; and to find his moſt vehement menaces and geſtures totally ineffectual on a being ſo ſlender and diminutive, at once wound up his rage, and excited his aſtoniſhment. One motion counteracted and ſuſpended the other; he lifted his hand, but delayed

delayed to ſtrike: one blow, applied with his uſual dexterity, was ſufficient to deſtroy me. Though ſeemingly careleſs, I was watchful of his motions, and prepared to elude the ſtroke by ſhrinking or ſtooping. Meanwhile I ſtretched my hand far enough to ſeize the bottle, and pouring its contents into a tumbler, put it to my lips.

"Come, Sir, I drink your health, and wiſh you ſpeedy poſſeſſion of Malverton. I have ſome intereſt with Eliza, and will prevail on her to forbear all oppoſition and complaint. Why ſhould ſhe complain? While I live, ſhe ſhall not be a beggar. No doubt your claim is legal, and therefore ought to be admitted. What the law gave, the law has taken away: bleſſed be the diſpenſers of law.—Excellent cider! open another bottle, will you? and I beſeech you to haſten dinner, if you would not ſee me devour the table."

It was juſt, perhaps, to conjure up the demon Avarice to fight with the demon Anger: reaſon alone would, in ſuch a conteſt, be

be powerleſs; but, in truth, I ſpoke without artifice or diſguiſe. If his claim were legal, oppoſition would be abſurd and pernicious. I meant not to rely upon his own aſſertions, and would not acknowledge the validity of his claim till I had inſpected the deed. Having inſtituted ſuits, this was now in a public office, and there the inſpection ſhould be made. Meanwhile, no reaſon could be urged why I ſhould part from him in anger, while his kindred to Eliza, and his title to her property, made it uſeful to ſecure his favour. It was poſſible to obtain a remiſſion of his claims, even when the law enforced them: it would be imprudent, at leaſt, to diminiſh the chances of remiſſion by foſtering his wrath, and provoking his enmity.

"What!" he exclaimed, in a tranſport of fury, "an't I maſter of my own houſe? Out, I ſay!"

Theſe were harſh terms, but they were not accompanied by geſtures and tones ſo menacing as thoſe which had before been uſed: it was plain that the tide, which ſo lately

lately threatened my deſtruction, had begun to recede. This encouraged me to perſiſt.

"Be not alarmed, my good friend," ſaid I placidly and ſmiling, "a man of your bone need not fear a pigmy like me; I ſhall ſcarcely be able to dethrone you in your own caſtle, with an army of hoſtlers, tapſters, and cooks at your beck; you ſhall ſtill be maſter here, provided you uſe your influence to procure me a dinner."

His acquieſcence in a pacific ſyſtem was extremely reluctant and gradual; he laid aſide one ſullen tone and wrathful look after the other; and at length conſented not only to ſupply me with a dinner, but to partake of it with me. Nothing was more a topic of ſurpriſe to himſelf than his forbearance: he knew not how it was—he had never been treated ſo before: he was not proof againſt entreaty and ſubmiſſion; but I had neither ſupplicated nor ſubmitted:—the ſtuff that I was made of was at once damnably tough and deviliſhly pliant. When he thought of my impudence in ſtaying in his houſe after he

he had bid me leave it, he was tempted to reſume his paſſion. When he reflected on my courage, in making light of his anger, notwithſtanding his known impetuoſity and my perſonal inferiority, he could not withhold his eſteem; but my patience under his rebukes, my unalterable equanimity, and my ready conſent to the validity of his claims, ſoothed and propitiated him.

An exemption from blows and abuſe was all that I could gain from this man. I told him the truth, with regard to my own hiſtory, ſo far as it was connected with the Hadwins;—I exhibited, in affecting colours, the helpleſs condition of Eliza; but could extort nothing from him but his conſent that, if ſhe choſe, ſhe might come and live with him: he would give her victuals and clothes for as much houſe-work as ſhe was able to do. If ſhe choſe to live elſewhere, he promiſed not to moleſt her, or intermeddle in her concerns; the houſe and land were his by law, and he would have them.

It

It was not my province to revile, or expoſtulate with him. I ſtated what meaſures would be adopted by a man, who regarded the intereſt of others more than his own—who was anxious for the welfare of an innocent girl, connected with him ſo cloſely by the ties of kindred, and who was deſtitute of what is called natural friends:—if he did not cancel, for her ſake, his bond and mortgage, he would at leaſt afford her a frugal maintenance—he would extend to her, in all emergencies, his counſel and protection.

All that he ſaid was perfect nonſenſe. He could not ſufficiently wonder at my folly, in propoſing to him to make a free gift of a hundred rich acres, to a girl, too, who ſcarcely knew her right hand from her left, whom the firſt cunning young rogue, like myſelf, would *chouſe* out of the whole, and take herſelf into the bargain. But my folly was even ſurpaſſed by my impudence, ſince, as the *friend* of this girl, I was merely petitioning on my own account: I had come to him, whom I never ſaw before, on whom I had

had no claim, and who, as I well knew, had reaſon to think me a ſharper, and modeſtly ſaid—"Here's a girl who has no fortune—I am greatly in want of one; pray give her ſuch an eſtate that you have in your poſſeſſion: if you do, I'll marry her, and take it into my own hands."—I might be thankful that he did not anſwer ſuch a petition with a horſewhipping. But if he did not give her his eſtate, he might extend to her, forſooth, his counſel and protection.—"That I have offered to do," continued he: "ſhe may come and live in my houſe if ſhe will; ſhe may do ſome of the family work; I'll diſcharge the chambermaid to make room for her. Lizzy, if I remember right, has a pretty face: ſhe can't have a better market for it than as a chambermaid to an inn; if ſhe minds her p's and q's, ſhe may make up a handſome ſum at the year's end."

I thought it time to break off the conference; and, my dinner being finiſhed, took my leave, leaving behind me the character

racter of a *queer ſort of chap*. I ſpeeded to the prothonotary's office, which was kept in the village, and quickly aſcertained the truth of Hadwin's pretenſions. There exiſted a mortgage, with bond and warrant of attorney, to ſo great an amount as would ſwallow up every thing at Malverton. Furniſhed with theſe tidings, I prepared, with a drooping heart, to return to Mr. Curling's.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

EXPOSTULATION.

THIS incident neceſſarily produced a change in my views with regard to my Eliza. Her fortune conſiſted of a few hundreds of dollars, which, frugally adminiſtered, might procure decent accommodation in the country. When this was conſumed, ſhe muſt find ſubſiſtence in tending the big-wheel or the milk-pail, unleſs Fortune ſhould enable me to place her in a more favourable ſituation. This ſtate was, in ſome reſpects, but little different from that in which ſhe had ſpent the former part of her life; but, in

in her father's houſe theſe employments were dignified by being in ſome degree voluntary, and relieved by frequent intervals of recreation and leiſure; now they were likely to prove irkſome and ſervile, in conſequence of being performed for hire, and impoſed by neceſſity: equality, parental ſolicitudes, and ſiſterly endearments would be wanting to lighten the yoke.

Theſe inconveniences, however, were imaginary: this was the ſchool in which fortitude and independence were to be learned; habit, and the purity of rural manners would likewiſe create anew thoſe ties which death had diſſolved—the affections of parent and ſiſter would be ſupplied by the fonder and more rational attachments of friendſhip. Theſe toils were not detrimental to beauty or health. What was to be dreaded from them was their tendency to quench the ſpirit of liberal curioſity—to habituate the perſon to bodily, rather than intellectual exertions—to ſuperſede, and create indifference or averſion to the only inſtruments

of rational improvement, the pen and the book.

This evil, however, was at ſome diſtance from Eliza: her preſent abode was quiet and ſerene; here ſhe might enjoy domeſtic pleaſures, and opportunities of mental improvement for the coming twelvemonth at leaſt. This period would, perhaps, be ſufficient for the formation of ſtudious habits. What ſchemes ſhould be adopted for this end, would be determined by the deſtiny to which I myſelf ſhould be reſerved.

My path was already chalked out, and my fancy now purſued it with uncommon pleaſure. To reſide in your family, to ſtudy your profeſſion, to purſue ſome ſubordinate or caſual mode of induſtry, by which I might purchaſe leiſure for medical purſuits, for ſocial recreations, and for the ſtudy of mankind on your buſy and thronged ſtage, was the ſcope of my wiſhes. This deſtiny would not hinder punctual correſpondence and occaſional viſits to Eliza; her pen might be called into action, and her mind be awakened

awakened by books, and every hour be made to add to her ſtores of knowledge, and enlarge the bounds of her capacity.

I was ſpiritleſs and gloomy when I left ———; but reflections on my future lot, and juſt views of the ſituation of Eliza, inſenſibly reſtored my cheerfulneſs. I arrived at Mr. Curling's in the evening, and haſtened to impart to her the iſſue of my commiſſion. It gave her uneaſineſs, merely as it fruſtrated the deſign, on which ſhe had fondly muſed, of reſiding in the city. She was ſomewhat conſoled by my promiſes of being her conſtant correſpondent and occaſional viſitor.

Next morning I ſet out on my journey hither on foot. The way was not long; the weather, though cold, was wholeſome and ſerene; my ſpirits were high, and I ſaw nothing in the world before me but ſunſhine and proſperity. I was conſcious that my happineſs depended not on the revolutions of nature, or the caprice of man: all without was, indeed, viciſſitude and uncertainty, but within my boſom was a center

not to be ſhaken or removed. My purpoſes were honeſt and ſteadfaſt; every ſenſe was the inlet of pleaſure, becauſe it was the avenue to knowledge; and my ſoul brooded over the world of ideas, and glowed with exultation at the grandeur and beauty of its own creations.

This felicity was too rapturous to be of long duration. I gradually deſcended from theſe heights; and the remembrance of paſt incidents, connected with the images of your family, to which I was returning, led my thoughts into a different channel. Welbeck and the unhappy girl whom he had betrayed, Mrs. Villars and Wallace were recollected anew. The views which I had formed for determining the fate, and affording aſſiſtance to Clemenza, were recalled. My former reſolutions with regard to her had been ſuſpended by the uncertainty in which the fate of the Hadwins was at that time wrapped. Had it not become neceſſary wholly to lay aſide theſe reſolutions?

That, indeed, was an irkſome concluſion: no

no wonder that I ſtruggled to repel it; that I foſtered the doubt whether money was the only inſtrument of benefit—whether caution and fortitude, and knowledge were not the genuine preſervatives from evil. Had I not the means in my hand of diſpelling her fatal ignorance of Welbeck, and of thoſe with whom ſhe reſided? Was I not authorized by my previous, though ſlender intercourſe, to ſeek her preſence?

Suppoſe I ſhould enter Mrs. Villars's houſe, deſire to be introduced to the lady, accoſt her with affectionate ſimplicity, and tell her the truth? Why be anxious to ſmooth the way—why deal in apologies, circuities, and innuendos? All theſe are feeble and perverſe refinements, unworthy of a honeſt purpoſe and an erect ſpirit. To believe her inacceſſible to my viſit was abſurd—to wait for the permiſſion of thoſe, whoſe intereſt it might be to ſhut out viſitants, was cowardice;—this was an infringement of her liberty, which equity and law equally condemned. By what right could

ſhe be reſtrained from intercourſe with others? Doors and paſſages may be between her and me: with a purpoſe ſuch as mine, no one had a right to cloſe the one, or obſtruct the other. Away with cowardly reluctances and clowniſh ſcruples, and let me haſten this moment to her dwelling.

Mrs. Villars is the portreſs of the manſion: ſhe will probably preſent herſelf before me, and demand the reaſon of my viſit. What ſhall I ſay to her? The truth: to falter, or equivocate, or diſſemble to this woman, would be wicked. Perhaps her character has been miſunderſtood and maligned;—can I render her a greater ſervice than to apprize her of the aſperſions that have reſted on it, and afford her the opportunity of vindication? Perhaps ſhe is indeed ſelfiſh and profligate—the betrayer of youth, and the agent of laſciviouſneſs. Does ſhe not deſerve to know the extent of her errors, and the ignominy of her trade?—does ſhe not merit the compaſſion of the good, and the rebukes of the wiſe? To ſhrink from the taſk would

would prove me cowardly and unfirm. Thus far, at leaſt, let my courage extend.

Alas! Clemenza is unacquainted with my language. My thoughts cannot make themſelves apparent but by words, and to my words ſhe will be able to affix no meaning. Yet is not that a haſty deciſion? The verſion from the dramas of Zeno, which I found on her toilet, was probably her's, and proves her to have a ſpeculative knowledge of our tongue. Near half-a-year has ſince elapſed, during which ſhe has dwelt with talkers of Engliſh, and conſequently could not fail to have acquired it. This concluſion is ſomewhat dubious, but experiment will give it certainty.

Hitherto I had ſtrolled along the path at a lingering pace; time enough, methought, to reach your threſhold between ſunriſe and moonlight, if my way had been three times longer than it was.—Yon were the pleaſing phantoms that hovered before me, and beckoned me forward. What a total revolution had occurred in the courſe of a few

ſeconds!—for thus long did my reaſonings with regard to Clemenza and the Villars' require to paſs through my underſtanding, and eſcape, in half-muttered ſoliloquy, from my lips. My muſcles trembled with eagerneſs, and I bounded forward with impetuoſity. I ſaw nothing but a viſta of catalpas, leafleſs, loaded with iſicles, and terminating in four chimnies and a painted roof: my fancy outſtripped my footſteps, and was buſy in picturing faces, and rehearſing dialogues. Preſently I reached this new object of my purſuit, darted through the avenue, noticed that ſome windows of the houſe were uncloſed, drew thence a haſty inference that the houſe was not without inhabitants, and knocked, quickly and loudly, for admiſſion.

Some one within crept to the door, opened it with ſeeming caution, and juſt far enough to allow the face to be ſeen. It was the timid, pale, and unwaſhed face of a girl, who was readily ſuppoſed to be a ſervant, taken from a cottage, and turned into a bringer

bringer of wood and water, and a ſcourer of tubs and trenchers. She waited in timorous ſilence the delivery of my meſſage.—"Is Mrs. Villars at home?"

"No: ſhe is gone to town."

"Are any of her daughters within?"

She could not tell; ſhe believed—ſhe thought——Which did I want? Miſs Hetty or Miſs Sally?

"Let me ſee Miſs Hetty."

Saying this, I puſhed gently againſt the door. The girl, half reluctant, yielded way: I entered the paſſage, and putting my hand on the lock of a door that ſeemed to lead into a parlour—"Is Miſs Hetty in this room?"

"No: there is nobody there."

"Go call her then: tell her there is one who wiſhes to ſee her on important buſineſs. I will wait for her coming in this room."

So ſaying, I opened the door, and entered the apartment, while the girl withdrew to perform my meſſage.

The parlour was ſpacious and expenſively furniſhed, but an air of negligence and diſorder was every where viſible. The carpet was wrinkled and unſwept; a clock on the table, in a glaſs frame, ſo ſtreaked and ſpotted with duſt as ſcarcely to be tranſparent, and the index motionleſs, and pointing at four inſtead of nine; embers ſcattered on the marble hearth, and tongs lying on the fender, with the handle in the aſhes; a harpſichord uncovered, one end loaded with *ſcores*, tumbled together in a heap, and the other with volumes of Novels and Plays, ſome on their edges, ſome on their backs, gaping open by the ſcorching of their covers, rent, blurred, ſtained, blotted, dog-eared; tables awry, chairs crowding each other; in ſhort, no object but indicated the neglect or ignorance of domeſtic neatneſs and economy.

My leiſure was employed in ſurveying theſe objects, and in liſtening for the approach of Miſs Hetty. Some minutes elapſed, and no one came. A reaſon for delay was eaſily imagined, and I ſummoned patience

patience to wait. I opened a book, touched the inſtrument, ſurveyed the vaſes on the mantle-piece, the figures on the hangings, and the print of Apollo and the Sibyl, taken from Salvator, and hung over the chimney. I eyed my own ſhape and garb in the mirror, and aſked how my ruſtic appearance would be regarded by that ſupercilious and voluptuous being, to whom I was about to preſent myſelf.

Preſently the latch of the door was ſoftly moved; it opened, and the ſimpleton before deſcribed, appeared. She ſpoke, but her voice was ſo full of heſitation, and ſo near a whiſper, that much attention was needed to make out her words.—Miſs Hetty was not at home—ſhe was gone to town with her *miſtiſs*.

This was a tale not to be credited. How was I to act? She perſiſted in maintaining the truth of it.—"Well then," ſaid I, at length, "tell Miſs Sally that I wiſh to ſpeak with her: ſhe will anſwer my purpoſe juſt as well."

Miſs Sally was not at home neither: ſhe had gone to town too; they would not be back, ſhe did not know when—not till night, ſhe ſuppoſed. It was ſo indeed; none of them wasn't at home: none but ſhe and Nanny in the kitchen—indeed'n there wasn't.

"Go tell Nanny to come here—I will leave my meſſage with her."

She withdrew, but Nanny did not receive the ſummons, or thought proper not to obey it: all was vacant and ſtill.

My ſtate was ſingular and critical. It was abſurd to prolong it; but to leave the houſe with my errand unexecuted, would argue imbecility and folly: to aſcertain Clemenza's preſence in this houſe, and to gain an interview, were yet in my power. Had I not boaſted of my intrepidity in braving denials and commands, when they endeavoured to obſtruct my paſſage to this woman? But here were no obſtacles nor prohibitions. Suppoſe the girl had ſaid truth, that the matron and her daughters were abſent, and that

that Nanny and herſelf were the only guardians of the manſion, ſo much the better—my deſign will not be oppoſed; I have only to mount the ſtairs, and go from one room to another, till I find what I ſeek.

There was hazard as well as plauſibility in this ſcheme. I thought it beſt once more to endeavour to extort information from the girl, and perſuade her to be my guide to whomſoever the houſe contained. I put my hand to the bell, and rung a briſk peal. No one came. I paſſed into the entry, to the foot of a ſtaircaſe, and to a back window. Nobody was within hearing or ſight.

Once more I reflected on the rectitude of my intentions, on the poſſibility that the girl's aſſertions might be true, on the benefits of expedition, and of gaining acceſs to the object of my viſit without interruption or delay. To theſe conſiderations was added a ſort of charm, not eaſily explained, and by no means juſtifiable, produced by the very temerity and hazard accompanying this attempt.

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attempt. I thought, with ſcornful emotions, on the bars and hindrances which pride and caprice, and deluſive maxims of decorum raiſe in the way of human intercourſe; I ſpurned at theſe ſemblances and ſubſtitutes of honeſty, and delighted to ſhake ſuch fetters into air, and trample ſuch impediments to duſt. I wanted to ſee a human being, in order to promote her happineſs. It was doubtful whether ſhe was within twenty paces of the ſpot where I ſtood. The doubt was to be ſolved. How? By examining the ſpace. I forthwith proceeded to examine it. I reached the ſecond ſtory—I approached a door that was cloſed—I knocked. After a pauſe, a ſoft voice ſaid—"Who is there?"

The accents were as muſical as thoſe of Clemenza, but were, in other reſpects, different. I had no topic to diſcuſs with this perſon. I anſwered not, yet heſitated to withdraw. Preſently the ſame voice was again heard.—"What is it you want? Why don't you anſwer? Come in!"

I complied

I complied with the command, and entered the room.

It was deliberation and foreſight that led me hither, and not chance or caprice; hence, inſtead of being diſconcerted or vanquiſhed by the objects that I ſaw, I was tranquil and firm. My curioſity, however, made me a vigilant obſerver. Two females, arrayed with voluptuous negligence, in a manner adapted to the utmoſt ſecluſion, and ſeated in a careleſs attitude on a ſofa, were now diſcovered.

Both darted glances at the door. One, who appeared to be the youngeſt, no ſooner ſaw me than ſhe ſhrieked; and ſtarting from her ſeat, betrayed, in the looks which ſhe ſucceſſively caſt upon me, on herſelf, and on the chamber, whoſe apparatus was in no leſs confuſion than that of the apartment below, her conſciouſneſs of the unſeaſonableneſs of this meeting.

The other ſhrieked likewiſe, but on her it ſeemed to be the token of ſurpriſe rather than that of terror. There was, probably, ſomewhat

ſomewhat in my aſpect and garb that ſuggeſted an apology for this intruſion, as ariſing from ſimplicity and miſtake: ſhe thought proper, however, to aſſume the air of one offended, and looking ſternly—"How now, fellow!" ſaid ſhe, "what is this? Why come you hither?"

This queſtioner was of mature age, but had not paſſed the period of attractiveneſs and grace. All the beauty that Nature had beſtowed was ſtill retained, but the portion had never been great. What ſhe poſſeſſed was ſo modelled and embelliſhed by ſuch a carriage and dreſs, as to give it moſt power over the ſenſes of the gazer. In proportion, however, as it was intended and adapted to captivate thoſe who know none but phyſical pleaſures, it was qualified to breed diſtaſte and averſion in me.

I am ſenſible how much error may have lurked in this deciſion. I had brought with me the belief of their being unchaſte, and ſeized, perhaps with too much avidity, any appearance that coincided with my pre-

poſſeſſions.

poſſeſſions. Yet the younger by no means inſpired the ſame diſguſt, though I had no reaſon to ſuppoſe her more unblemiſhed than the elder. Her modeſty ſeemed unaffected, and was by no means ſatisfied, like that of the elder, with defeating future curioſity: the conſciouſneſs of what had already been expoſed filled her with confuſion, and ſhe would have flown away, if her companion had not detained her by ſome degree of force.—"What ails the girl? There's nothing to be frightened at. Fellow!" ſhe repeated, "what brings you here?"

I advanced and ſtood before them. I looked ſtedfaſtly, but I believe with neither effrontery nor anger, on the one who addreſſed me: I ſpoke in a tone ſerious and emphatical.—"I come for the ſake of ſpeaking to a woman who formerly reſided in this houſe, and probably reſides here ſtill. Her name is Clemenza Lodi. If ſhe be here, I requeſt you to conduct me to her inſtantly."

Methought I perceived ſome inquietude, and a leſs imperious and more inquiſitive air in

this

this woman, on hearing the name of Clemenza. It was momentary, and gave way to peremptory looks.

"What is your buſineſs with her? and why did you adopt this mode of enquiry? A very extraordinary intruſion! Be good enough to leave the chamber. Any queſtions proper to be anſwered, will be anſwered below."

"I meant not to intrude or offend; it was not an idle or impertinent motive that led me hither. I waited below for ſome time after ſoliciting an audience of you through the ſervant. She aſſured me you were abſent, and laid me under the neceſſity of ſearching for Clemenza Lodi myſelf, and without a guide. I am anxious to withdraw, and requeſt merely to be directed to the room which ſhe occupies."

"I direct you," replied ſhe in a more reſolute tone, "to quit the room and the houſe!"

"Impoſſible, Madam!" I replied, ſtill looking at her earneſtly—"leave the houſe without

without ſeeing her! You might as well enjoin me to pull the Andes on my head, to walk barefoot to Pekin!—Impoſſible!"

Some ſolicitude was now mingled with her anger.—"This is ſtrange inſolence—unaccountable behaviour! Begone from my room!—Will you compel me to call the gentlemen?"

"Be not alarmed," ſaid I, with augmented mildneſs;—there was indeed compaſſion and ſorrow at my heart, and theſe muſt have ſomewhat influenced my looks:—"be not alarmed—I came to confer a benefit, not to perpetrate an injury—I came not to cenſure or expoſtulate with you, but merely to counſel and aid a being that needs both—all I want is to ſee her: in this chamber I ſought not you, but her; only lead me to her, or tell me where ſhe is; I will then rid you of my preſence."

"Will you compel me to call thoſe who will puniſh this inſolence as it deſerves?"

"Deareſt Madam, I compel you to nothing—I merely ſupplicate; I would aſk you to

to lead me to theſe gentlemen, if I did not know that there are none but females in the houſe. It is you who muſt receive and comply with my petition. Allow me a moment's interview with Clemenza Lodi. Compliance will harm you not, but will benefit her. What is your objection?"

"This is the ſtrangeſt proceeding—the moſt ſingular conduct! Is this a place fit to parley with you? I warn you of the conſequence of ſtaying a moment longer—depend upon it, you will ſorely repent it!"

"You are obdurate," ſaid I, and turned towards the younger, who liſtened to this diſcourſe in tremors and panic. I took her hand with an air of humility and reverence. —"Here," ſaid I, "there ſeem to be purity, innocence, and condeſcenſion. I took this houſe to be the temple of voluptuouſneſs; females I expected to find in it, but ſuch only as traded in licentious pleaſures—ſpecious, perhaps not deſtitute of talents, beauty, and addreſs, but diſſolute and wanton, ſenſual and avaricious; yet in this

this countenance and carriage there are tokens of virtue. I am born to be deceived, and the ſemblance of modeſty is readily aſſumed: —under this veil perhaps lurk a tainted heart and depraved appetites.—Is it ſo?"

She made no anſwer, but ſomewhat in her looks ſeemed to evince that my favourable prepoſſeſſions were juſt. I noticed likewiſe that the alarm of the elder was greatly increaſed by this addreſs to her companion. The thought ſuddenly occurred that this girl might be in circumſtances not unlike thoſe of Clemenza Lodi—that ſhe was not apprized of the character of her aſſociates, and might by this meeting be reſcued from ſimilar evils.

This ſuſpicion filled me with tumultuous feelings. Clemenza was for a time forgotten. I paid no attention to the looks or demeanour of the elder, but was wholly occupied in gazing on the younger. My anxiety to know the truth gave pathos and energy to my tones while I ſpoke.

"Who, where, what are you? Do you reſide

reſide in this houſe? Are you a ſiſter or daughter in this family, or merely a viſitant? Do you know the character, profeſſion, and views of your companions? Do you deem them virtuous, or know them to be profligate?—Speak—tell me, I beſeech you!"

The maiden confuſion which had juſt appeared in the countenance of this perſon, now ſomewhat abated:—ſhe lifted her eyes, and glanced by turns at me and at her who ſat by her ſide. An air of ſerious aſtoniſhment overſpread her features, and ſhe ſeemed anxious for me to proceed. The elder, meanwhile, betrayed the utmoſt alarm, again upbraided my audacity, commanded me to withdraw, and admoniſhed me of the danger I incurred by lingering.

I noticed not her interference, but again entreated to know of the younger her true ſtate. She had no time to anſwer me, ſuppoſing her not to want the inclination; for every pauſe was filled by the clamorous importunities and menaces of the other. I began to perceive that my attempts were

uſeleſs

uſeleſs to this end; but the chief and moſt eſtimable purpoſe was attainable: it was in my power to ſtate the knowledge I poſſeſſed, through your means, of Mrs. Villars and her daughters. This information might be ſuperfluous, ſince ſhe to whom it was given, might be one of this licentious family: the contrary, however, was not improbable; and my tidings, therefore, might be of the utmoſt moment to her ſafety.

A reſolute and even impetuous manner reduced my inceſſant interruptor to ſilence. What I had to ſay, I compreſſed in a few words, and adhered to perſpicuity and candour with the utmoſt care. I ſtill held the hand that I had taken, and fixed my eyes upon her countenance with a ſtedfaſtneſs that hindered her from lifting her's.

"I know you not; whether you be diſſolute or chaſte, I cannot tell: in either caſe, however, what I am going to ſay will be uſeful. Let me faithfully repeat what I have heard; it is mere rumour, and I vouch not for its truth. Rumour as it is, I ſubmit

it

it to your judgment, and hope that it may guide you into paths of innocence and honour.

" Mrs. Villars and her three daughters are Engliſhwomen, who ſupported for a time an unblemiſhed reputation, but who at length were ſuſpected of carrying on the trade of proſtitution. This ſecret could not be concealed for ever. The profligates who frequented their houſe, betrayed them;—one of them who died under their roof, after they had withdrawn from it into the country, diſcloſed to his kinſman, who attended his death-bed, their genuine character.

" The dying man likewiſe related incidents in which I am deeply concerned. I have been connected with one by name Welbeck. In his houſe I met an unfortunate girl, who was afterwards removed to Mrs. Villars's. Her name was Clemenza Lodi. Reſidence in this houſe, under the controul of a woman like Mrs. Villars and her daughters, muſt be injurious to her inno-

cence; and from this controul I now come to reſcue her."

I turned to the elder, and continued—"By all that is ſacred, I adjure you to tell me whether Clemenza Lodi be under this roof! If ſhe be not, whither has ſhe gone? To know this, I came hither, and any difficulty or reluctance in anſwering will be uſeleſs;—till an anſwer be obtained, I will not go hence."

During this ſpeech anger had been kindling in the boſom of this woman; it now burſt upon me in a torrent of opprobrious epithets.—I was a villain, a calumniator, a thief; I had lurked about the houſe till thoſe whoſe ſex and ſtrength enabled them to cope with me, had gone; I had entered theſe doors by fraud; I was a wretch, guilty of the laſt exceſſes of inſolence and inſult.

To repel theſe reproaches, or endure them, was equally uſeleſs; the ſatisfaction that I ſought was only to be gained by ſearching the houſe. I left the room without ſpeaking. Did I act illegally in paſſing from one

ſtory and one room to another? Did I really deſerve the imputations of raſhneſs and inſolence? My behaviour, I well know, was ambiguous and hazardous, and perhaps wanting in diſcretion; but my motives were unqueſtionably pure. I aimed at nothing but the reſcue of a human creature from diſtreſs and diſhonour.

I pretend not to the wiſdom of experience and age—to the praiſe of forethought or ſubtilty; I chuſe the obvious path, and purſue it with headlong expedition. Good intentions, unaided by knowledge, will perhaps produce more injury than benefit; and therefore knowledge muſt be gained: but the acquiſition is not momentary—is not beſtowed unaſked and untoiled for: meanwhile we muſt not be inactive becauſe we are ignorant; our good purpoſes muſt hurry us to performance, whether our knowledge be greater or leſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

THE MANIAC.

TO explore the houſe in this manner was ſo contrary to ordinary rules, that the deſign was probably wholly unſuſpected by the women whom I had juſt left. My ſilence at parting might have been aſcribed by them to the intimidating influence of invectives and threats. Hence I proceeded in my ſearch without interruption.

Preſently I reached a front chamber in the third ſtory. The door was ajar: I entered it on tiptoe. Sitting on a low chair by the fire, I beheld a female figure, dreſſed in

a negligent, but not indecent manner. Her face in the poſture in which ſhe ſat, was only half ſeen: its hues were ſickly and pale, and in mournful uniſon with a feeble and emaciated form. Her eyes were fixed upon a babe that lay ſtretched upon a pillow at her feet. The child, like its mother (for ſuch ſhe was readily imagined to be) was meager and cadaverous; either it was dead, or could not be very diſtant from death.

The features of Clemenza were eaſily recogniſed, though no contraſt could be greater in habit, and ſhape, and complexion, than that which her preſent bore to her former appearance. All her roſes had faded, and her brilliancies vaniſhed: ſtill, however, there was ſomewhat fitted to awaken the tendereſt emotions—there were tokens of inconſolable diſtreſs.

Her attention was wholly abſorbed by the child; ſhe lifted not her eyes till I came cloſe to her, and ſtood before her. When ſhe diſcovered me, a faint ſtart was perceived. She

She looked at me for a moment; then putting one ſpread hand before her eyes, ſhe ſtretched out the other towards the door, and waved it in ſilence, as if to admoniſh me to depart.

This motion, however emphatical, I could not obey: I wiſhed to obtain her attention, but knew not in what words to claim it—I was ſilent. In a moment ſhe removed her hand from her eyes, and looked at me with new eagerneſs:—her features beſpoke emotions which, perhaps, flowed from my likeneſs to her brother, joined with the memory of my connection with Welbeck.

My ſituation was full of embarraſſment. I was by no means certain that my language would be underſtood; I knew not in what light the policy and diſſimulation of Welbeck might have taught her to regard me. What propoſal, conducive to her comfort and her ſafety, could I make to her?

Once more ſhe covered her eyes, and exclaimed in a feeble voice—"Go away!—begone!"

As if ſatisfied with this effort, ſhe reſumed her attention to her child :—ſhe ſtooped, and lifted it in her arms, gazing meanwhile on its almoſt lifeleſs features with intenſe anxiety. She preſſed it to her boſom ; and again looking at me, repeated—" Go away !—go away !—begone !"

There was ſomewhat in the lines of her face, in her tones and geſtures, that pierced to my heart :—added to this, was my knowledge of her friendleſs condition—her poverty—the pangs of unrequited love—and her expiring infant. I felt my utterance choked, and my tears ſtruggling for paſſage : I turned to the window, and endeavoured to regain my tranquillity.

" What was it," ſaid I, " that brought me hither? The perfidy of Welbeck muſt ſurely have long ſince been diſcovered. What can I tell her of the Villars' which ſhe does not already know, or of which the knowledge will be uſeful ? If their treatment has been juſt, why ſhould I detract from their merit ? If it has been otherwiſe, their own conduct

conduct will have diſcloſed their genuine character. Though voluptuous themſelves, it does not follow that they have laboured to debaſe this creature; though wanton, they may not be inhuman.

"I can propoſe no change in her condition for the better. Should ſhe be willing to leave this houſe, whither is it in my power to conduct her? Oh that I were rich enough to provide food for the hungry, ſhelter for the houſeleſs, and raiment for the naked!"

I was rouſed from theſe fruitleſs reflections by the lady, whom ſome ſudden thought induced to place the child in its bed; and riſing to come towards me, the utter dejection which her features lately betrayed, was now changed for an air of anxious curioſity. —"Where," ſaid ſhe, in her broken Engliſh, "where is Signor Welbeck?"

"Alas!" returned I, "I know not! That queſtion might, I thought, with more propriety be put to you than to me."

"I know where he be; I fear where he be!"

So ſaying, the deepeſt ſighs burſt from her heart. She turned from me, and going to the child, took it again into her lap. Its pale and ſunken cheek was quickly wet with the mother's tears, which, as ſhe ſilently hung over it, dropped faſt from her eyes.

This demeanour could not but awaken curioſity, while it gave a new turn to my thoughts. I began to ſuſpect that in the tokens which I ſaw, there was not only diſtreſs for her child, but concern for the fate of Welbeck.

"Know you," ſaid I, "where Mr. Welbeck is? Is he alive? Is he near? Is he in calamity?"

"I do not know if he be alive: he be ſick; he be in priſon! They will not let me to go to him; and——"

Here her attention and mine was attracted by the infant, whoſe frame, till now motionleſs, began to be tremulous: its features ſunk

ſunk into a more ghaſtly expreſſion; its breathings were difficult, and every effort to reſpire produced a convulſion harder than the laſt.

The mother eaſily interpreted theſe tokens. The ſame mortal ſtruggle ſeemed to take place in her features as in thoſe of her child. At length her agony found way in a piercing ſhriek. The ſtruggle in the infant was paſt. Hope looked in vain for a new motion in its heart or its eyelids, The lips were cloſed, and its breath was gone for ever!

The grief which overwhelmed the unhappy parent was of that outrageous and deſperate kind which is wholly incompatible with thinking. A few incoherent motions and ſcreams that rent the ſoul, were followed by a deep ſwoon: ſhe ſunk upon the floor, pale and lifeleſs as her babe.

I need not deſcribe the pangs which ſuch a ſcene was adapted to produce in me. Theſe were rendered more acute by the helpleſs and ambiguous ſituation in which I

was placed. I was eager to beſtow conſolation and ſuccour, but was deſtitute of all means. I was plunged into uncertainties and doubts; I gazed alternately at the infant and its mother; I ſighed—I wept—I even ſobbed. I ſtooped down, and took the lifeleſs hand of the ſufferer; I bathed it with my tears, and exclaimed—"Ill-fated woman! unhappy mother! what ſhall I do for thy relief? How ſhall I blunt the edge of this calamity, and reſcue thee from new evils?"

At this moment the door of the apartment was opened, and the youngeſt of the women whom I had ſeen below, entered. Her looks betrayed the deepeſt conſternation and anxiety. Her eyes in a moment were fixed by the decayed form and the ſad features of Clemenza. She ſhuddered at this ſpectacle, but was ſilent. She ſtood in the midſt of the floor, fluctuating and bewildered. I dropped the hand that I was holding, and approached her.

"You have come," ſaid I, "in good ſeaſon.

feaſon. I know you not, but will believe you to be good. You have a heart, it may be, not free from corruption, but it is ſtill capable of pity for the miſeries of others. You have an hand that refuſes not its aid to the unhappy. See, there is an infant dead; there is a mother whom grief has, for a time, deprived of life! She has been oppreſſed and betrayed—been robbed of property and reputation, but not of innocence. She is worthy of relief. Have you arms to receive her? Have you ſympathy, protection, and a home to beſtow upon a forlorn, betrayed, and unhappy ſtranger? I know not what this houſe is; I ſuſpect it to be no better than a brothel. I know not what treatment this woman has received. If, when her ſituation and wants are aſcertained, will you ſupply her wants? Will you reſcue her from evils that may attend her continuance here?"

She was diſconcerted and bewildered by this addreſs. At length ſhe ſaid—"All that has happened, all that I have heard and

ſeen, is ſo unexpected, ſo ſtrange, that I am amazed and diſtracted. Your behaviour I cannot comprehend, nor your motive for making this addreſs to me. I cannot anſwer you, except in one reſpect. If this woman has ſuffered injury, I have no part in it. I knew not of her exiſtence nor her ſituation till this moment; and whatever protection or aſſiſtance ſhe may juſtly claim, I am both able and willing to beſtow. I do not live here, but in the city: I am only an occaſional viſitant in this houſe."

"What then," I exclaimed, with ſparkling eyes and a rapturous accent, "you are not profligate! are a ſtranger to the manners of this houſe, and a deteſter of theſe manners! Be not a deceiver, I entreat you: I depend only on your looks and profeſſions, and theſe may be diſſembled."

Theſe queſtions, which indeed argued a childiſh ſimplicity, excited her ſurpriſe. She looked at me, uncertain whether I was in earneſt or in jeſt. At length ſhe ſaid—"Your language is ſo ſingular, that I am at a loſs

a loſs how to anſwer it. I ſhall take no pains to find out its meaning, but leave you to form conjectures at leiſure. Who is this woman, and how can I ſerve her?"—After a pauſe, ſhe continued—" I cannot afford her any immediate aſſiſtance, and ſhall not ſtay a moment longer in this houſe. There," putting a card in my hand, " is my name and place of abode. If you ſhould have any propoſals to make reſpecting this woman, I ſhall be ready to receive them in my own houſe."

So ſaying, ſhe withdrew.

I looked wiſtfully after her, but could not but aſſent to her aſſertion, that her preſence here would be more injurious to her, than beneficial to Clemenza. She had ſcarcely gone, when the elder woman entered. There was rage, ſullenneſs, and diſappointment in her aſpect. Theſe, however, were ſuſpended by the ſituation in which ſhe diſcovered the mother and child. It was plain that all the ſentiments of woman were not extinguiſhed in her heart. She

ſummoned

ſummoned the ſervants, and ſeemed preparing to take ſuch meaſures as the occaſion preſcribed. I now ſaw the folly of ſuppoſing that theſe meaſures would be neglected, and that my preſence could not eſſentially contribute to the benefit of the ſufferer. Still, however, I lingered in the room, till the infant was covered with a cloth, and the ſtill ſenſeleſs parent was conveyed into an adjoining chamber. The woman then, as if ſhe had not ſeen me before, fixed her ſcowling eyes upon me, and exclaimed—"Thief! villain! why do you ſtay here?"

"I mean to go," ſaid I, "but not till I expreſs my gratitude and pleaſure at the ſight of your attention to this ſufferer. You deem me inſolent and perverſe, but I am not ſuch, and hope that the day will come when I ſhall convince you of my good intentions."

"Begone!" interrupted ſhe, in a more angry tone; "begone this moment, or I will treat you as a thief!"—She now drew forth her hand from under her gown, and

ſhewed

ſhewed a piſtol.—"You ſhall ſee," ſhe continued, "that I will not be inſulted with impunity: if you do not vaniſh, I will ſhoot you as a robber."

This woman was far from wanting a force and intrepidity worthy of a different ſex. Her geſtures and tones were full of energy: they denoted a haughty and indignant ſpirit. It was plain that ſhe conceived herſelf deeply injured by my conduct: and was it abſolutely certain that her anger was without reaſon? I had loaded her houſe with atrocious imputations, and theſe imputations might be falſe. I had conceived them upon ſuch evidence as chance had provided; but this evidence, intricate and dubious as human actions and motives are, might be void of truth.

"Perhaps," ſaid I, in a ſedate tone, "I have injured you—I have miſtaken your character. You ſhall not find me leſs ready to repair than to perpetrate this injury. My error was without malice, and——"

I had not time to finiſh the ſentence, when

when this raſh and enraged woman thruſt the piſtol cloſe to my head, and fired it. I was wholly unaware that her fury would lead her to this exceſs. It was a ſort of mechanical impulſe that made me raiſe my hand, and attempt to turn aſide the weapon. I did this deliberately and tranquilly, and without conceiving that any thing more was intended by her movement than to intimidate me. To this precaution, however, I was indebted for my life: the bullet was diverted from my forehead to my left ear, and made a ſlight wound upon the ſurface, from which the blood guſhed in a ſtream.

The loudneſs of this exploſion, and the ſhock which the ball produced in my brain, ſunk me into a momentary ſtupor. I reeled backward, and ſhould have fallen, had not I ſupported myſelf againſt the wall. The ſight of my blood inſtantly reſtored her reaſon: her rage diſappeared, and was ſucceeded by terror and remorſe. She claſped her hands, and exclaimed—"Oh, what have

have I done! My frantic paſſion has deſtroyed me!"

It needed no long time to ſhew me the full extent of the injury which I had ſuffered, and the conduct which it became me to adopt. For a moment I was bewildered and alarmed; but I preſently perceived that this was an incident more productive of good than of evil. It would teach me caution in contending with the paſſions of another, and ſhew me that there is a limit which the impetuoſities of anger will ſometimes overſtep. Inſtead of reviling my companion, I addreſſed myſelf to her thus:—

"Be not frightened: you have done me no injury, and I hope will derive inſtruction from this event. Your raſhneſs had like to have ſacrificed the life of one who is your friend, and to have expoſed yourſelf to infamy and death, or, at leaſt, to the pangs of eternal remorſe. Learn, from hence, to curb your paſſions, and eſpecially to keep at a diſtance from every murderous weapon, on occaſions when rage is likely to take place

place of reaſon. I repeat that my motives in entering this houſe were connected with your happineſs, as well as that of Clemenza Lodi. If I have erred in ſuppoſing you the member of a vile and pernicious trade, that error was worthy of being rectified; but violence and invective tend only to confirm it. I am incapable of any purpoſe that is not beneficent; but in the means that I uſe, and in the evidence on which I proceed, I am liable to a thouſand miſtakes. Point out to me the road by which I can do you good, and I will cheerfully purſue it."

Finding that her fears had been groundleſs as to the conſequences of her raſhneſs, ſhe renewed, though with leſs vehemence than before, her imprecations on my intermeddling and audacious folly. I liſtened till the ſtorm was nearly exhauſted, and then, declaring my intention to reviſit the houſe if the intereſt of Clemenza ſhould require it, I reſumed my way to the city.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

MISERY AND DISTRESS.

"WHY," ſaid I, as I haſtened forward, "is my fortune ſo abundant in unforeſeen occurrences? Is every man, who leaves his cottage, and the impreſſions of his infancy behind him, uſhered into ſuch a world of revolutions and perils as have trammelled my ſteps? or, is my ſcene indebted for variety and change to my propenſity to look into other people's concerns, and to make their ſorrows and their joys mine? To indulge an adventurous ſpirit, I left the precincts of the barn-door, inliſted in the ſervice

vice of a ſtranger, and encountered a thouſand dangers to my virtue under the diſaſtrous influence of Welbeck. Afterwards my life was ſet at hazard in the cauſe of Wallace, and now am I loaded with the care of protecting the helpleſs Eliza Hadwin and the unfortunate Clemenza. My wiſhes are fervent, and my powers ſhall not be inactive in their defence; but how ſlender are theſe powers! In the offers of the unknown lady there is, indeed, ſome conſolation for Clemenza. It muſt be my buſineſs to lay before my friend Stevens the particulars of what has befallen me, and to entreat his directions how this diſconſolate girl may be moſt effectually ſuccoured. It may be wiſe to take her from her preſent abode, and place her under ſome chaſte and humane guardianſhip, where ſhe may gradually loſe remembrance of her dead infant and her ſpecious betrayer:—the barrier that ſevers her from Welbeck muſt be high as Heaven, and inſuperable as neceſſity.

"But, ſoft! talked ſhe not of Welbeck? Said ſhe

ſhe not that he was in priſon, and was ſick? Poor wretch! I thought thy courſe was at an end—that the penalty of guilt no longer weighed down thy heart—that thy miſdeeds and thy remorſes were buried in a common and obſcure grave; but it ſeems thou art ſtill alive!—Is it rational to cheriſh the hope of thy reſtoration to innocence and peace? Thou art no obdurate criminal: hadſt thou leſs virtue, thy compunctions would be leſs keen. Wert thou deaf to the voice of duty, thy wanderings into guilt and folly would be leſs fertile of anguiſh. The time will perhaps come, when the meaſure of thy tranſgreſſions and calamities will overflow, and the folly of thy choice will be too conſpicuous to eſcape thy diſcernment. Surely, even for ſuch tranſgreſſors as thou, there is a ſalutary power in the precepts of truth, and the leſſons of experience.

"But thou art impriſoned and art ſick. This, perhaps, is the criſis of thy deſtiny. Indigence and diſhonour were the evils, to ſhun which thy integrity and peace of mind have been lightly

lightly forfeited. Thou haſt found that the price was given in vain; that the hollow and deceitful enjoyments of opulence and dignity were not worth the purchaſe; and that, frivolous and unſubſtantial as they are, the only path that leads to them is that of honeſty and diligence. Thou art in priſon and art ſick, and there is none to cheer thy hour with offices of kindneſs, or uphold thy fainting courage by the ſuggeſtions of good counſel. For ſuch as thou the world has no compaſſion; mankind will purſue thee to the grave with execrations; their cruelty will be juſtified or palliated, ſince they know thee not; they are unacquainted with the goadings of thy conſcience, and the bitter retributions which thou art daily ſuffering; they are full of their own wrongs, and think only of thoſe tokens of exultation and complacency which thou waſt ſtudious of aſſuming in thy intercourſe with them. It is I only that thoroughly know thee, and can rightly eſtimate thy claims to compaſſion. I have ſomewhat partaken of thy kindneſs,

and thou meriteſt ſome gratitude at my hands. Shall I not viſit, and endeavour to conſole thee in thy diſtreſs? Let me, at leaſt, aſcertain thy condition, and be the inſtrument in repairing the wrongs which thou haſt inflicted: let me gain, from contemplation of thy miſeries, new motives to ſincerity and rectitude."

While occupied by theſe reflections, I entered the city. The thoughts which engroſſed my mind related to Welbeck. It is not my cuſtom to defer till to-morrow what can be done to-day. The deſtiny of man frequently hangs upon the lapſe of a minute.

"I will ſtop," ſaid I, "at the priſon; and ſince the moment of my arrival may not be indifferent, I will go thither with all poſſible haſte."

I did not content myſelf with walking, but, regardleſs of the comments of paſſengers, hurried along the way at full ſpeed.

Having enquired for Welbeck, I was conducted through a dark room, crowded with beds, to a ſtaircaſe. Never before had I been

been in a priſon; never had I ſmelt ſo noiſome an odour, or ſurveyed faces ſo begrimed with filth and miſery. The walls and floors were alike ſqualid and deteſtable. It ſeemed that in this houſe exiſtence would be bereaved of all its attractions; and yet thoſe faces, which could be ſeen through the obſcurity that encompaſſed them, were either void of care, or diſtorted with mirth.

"This," ſaid I, as I followed my conductor, "is the reſidence of Welbeck. What contraſts are theſe to the repoſe and ſplendour, pictured walls, gloſſy hangings, gilded ſofas, mirrors that reached from ceiling to floor, carpets of Tauris, and the ſpotleſs and tranſcendent brilliancy of coverlets and napkins, in thy former dwelling? Here brawling and the ſhuffling of rude feet are eternal; the air is loaded with the exhalations of diſeaſe and the fumes of debauchery. Thou art cooped up in airleſs ſpace, and perhaps compelled to ſhare thy narrow cell with ſome ſtupid ruffian. Formerly, the breezes were courted by thy lofty

lofty windows; aromatic ſhrubs were ſcattered on thy hearth; menials, ſplendid in apparel, ſhewed their faces with diffidence in thy apartment, trod lightly on thy marble floor, and ſuffered not the ſanctity of ſilence to be troubled by a whiſper; thy lamp ſhot its rays through the tranſparency of alabaſter, and thy fragrant lymph flowed from vaſes of porcelain. Such were formerly the decorations of thy hall, the embelliſhments of thy exiſtence; but now, alas!——"

We reached a chamber in the ſecond ſtory. My conductor knocked at the door. No one anſwered. Repeated knocks were unheard or unnoticed by the perſon within. At length, lifting a latch, we entered together.

The priſoner lay upon the bed, with his face turned from the door. I advanced ſoftly, making a ſign to the keeper to withdraw. Welbeck was not aſleep, but merely buried in reverie. I was unwilling to diſturb his muſing, and ſtood with my eyes fixed upon his form. He appeared unconſcious

that any one had entered. At length, uttering a deep ſigh, he changed his poſture, and perceived me in my motionleſs and gazing attitude.

Recollect in what circumſtances we had laſt parted. Welbeck had, no doubt, carried away with him from that interview a firm belief that I ſhould ſpeedily die. His prognoſtic, however, was fated to be contradicted.

His firſt emotions were thoſe of ſurpriſe. Theſe gave place to mortification and rage. After eyeing me for ſome time, he averted his glances; and that effort which is made to diſſipate ſome obſtacle to breathing, ſhewed me that his ſenſations were of the moſt excruciating kind. He laid his head upon the pillow, and ſunk into his former muſing. He diſdained, or was unable, to utter a ſyllable of welcome or contempt.

In the opportunity that had been afforded me to view his countenance, I had obſerved tokens of a kind very different from thoſe which uſed to be viſible. The gloomy and malignant

malignant were more conſpicuous. Health had forſaken his cheeks, and taken along with it thoſe flexible parts, which formerly enabled him to cover his ſecret torments and inſidious purpoſes beneath a veil of benevolence and cheerfulneſs.

"Alas!" ſaid I, loud enough for him to hear me, "here is a monument of ruin: deſpair and miſchievous paſſions are too deeply rooted in this heart for me to tear them away."

Theſe expreſſions did not eſcape his notice: he turned once more, and caſt ſullen looks upon me. There was ſomewhat in his eyes that made me ſhudder. They denoted that his reverie was not that of grief, but of madneſs. I continued, in a lower voice than before—

"Unhappy Clemenza! I have performed thy meſſage: I have viſited him that is ſick and in priſon. Thou hadſt cauſe for anguiſh and terror, even greater cauſe than thou didſt imagine. Would to God that thou wouldſt be contented with the report which

I ſhall make; that thy miſguided tenderneſs would conſent to leave him to his deſtiny—would ſuffer him to die alone; but that is a forbearance which no eloquence that I poſſeſs will induce thee to practiſe: thou muſt come, and witneſs for thyſelf."

In ſpeaking thus, I was far from foreſeeing the effects which would be produced on the mind of Welbeck. I was far from intending to inſtil into him a belief that Clemenza was near at hand, and was preparing to enter his apartment: yet no other images but theſe would, perhaps, have rouſed him from his lethargy, and awakened that attention which I wiſhed to excite. He ſtarted up, and gazed fearfully at the door.

"What!" he cried, "what, is ſhe here? Ye powers, that have ſcattered woes in my path, ſpare me the ſight of her! But from this agony I will reſcue myſelf: the moment ſhe appears, I will pluck out theſe eyes, and daſh them at her feet!"

So ſaying, he gazed with augmented eagerneſs upon the door. His hands were lifted

to

to his head, as if ready to execute his frantic purpoſe. I ſeized his arm, and beſought him to lay aſide his terror, for that Clemenza was far diſtant. She had no intention, and beſides was unable to viſit him.

"Then I am reſpited!—I breathe again. No, keep her from a priſon. Drag her to the wheel or to the ſcaffold, mangle her with ſtripes, torture her with famine, ſtrangle her child before her face, and caſt it to the hungry dogs that are howling at the gate, but—keep her from a priſon!—never let her enter theſe doors!"

There he ſtopped, his eyes being fixed on the floor, and his thoughts once more buried in reverie. I reſumed—

"She is occupied with other griefs than thoſe connected with the fate of Welbeck. She is not unmindful of you: ſhe knows you to be ſick and in priſon; and I came to do for you whatever office your condition might require, and I came at her ſuggeſtion. She, alas! has full employment for her tears in watering the grave of her child."

He ſtarted.—" What, dead! Say you that the child is dead?"

" It is dead: I witneſſed its death. I ſaw it expire in the arms of its mother; that mother whom I formerly met under your roof, blooming and gay, but whom calamity has tarniſhed and withered. I ſaw her in the raiment of poverty, under an accurſed roof, deſolate, alone, unſolaced by the countenance or ſympathy of human beings, approached only by thoſe who mock at her diſtreſs, ſet ſnares for her innocence, and puſh her to infamy: I ſaw her leaning over the face of her dying babe!"

Welbeck put his hands to his head, and exclaimed—" Curſes on thy lips, infernal meſſenger! Chant elſewhere thy rueful ditty! Vaniſh, if thou wouldſt not feel in thy heart fangs red with blood leſs guilty than thine!"

Till this moment the tumult in Welbeck's mind appeared to hinder him from diſtinctly recogniſing his viſitant: now it ſeemed as if the

the incidents of our laſt interview ſuddenly ſprung up in his remembrance.

" What! This is the villain that rifled my cabinet, the author of my poverty, and of all the evils which it has ſince engendered! —that has led me to a priſon! Execrable fool! you are the author of the ſcene that you deſcribe, and of horrors without number and name! To whatever crimes I have been urged ſince that interview, and the fit of madneſs that made you deſtroy my property, they ſpring from your act; they flowed from neceſſity, which, had you held your hand at that fateful moment, would never have exiſted. How dare you thruſt yourſelf upon my privacy? Why am I not alone? Fly, and let my miſeries want, at leaſt, the aggravation of beholding their author! My eyes loathe the ſight of thee! My heart would ſuffocate thee with its own bitterneſs! Begone!"

" I know not," anſwered I, " why innocence ſhould tremble at the ravings of a lunatic—why it ſhould be overwhelmed by

unmerited reproaches—why it ſhou'd not deplore the errors of its foe, labour to correct thoſe errors, and——"

"Thank thy fate, youth, that my hands are tied up by my ſcorn—thank thy fate that no weapon is within reach. Much has paſſed ſince I ſaw thee, and I am a new man. I am no longer inconſtant and cowardly: I have no motives but contempt to hinder me from expiating the wrongs which thou haſt done me in thy blood. I diſdain to take thy life. Go, and let thy fidelity, at leaſt, to the confidence which I have placed in thee, be inviolate. Thou haſt done me harm enough, but canſt do, if thou wilt, ſtill more: thou canſt betray the ſecrets that are lodged in thy boſom, and rob me of the comfort of reflecting that my guilt is known but to one among the living."

This ſuggeſtion made me pauſe, and look back upon the paſt. I had confided this man's tale to you: the ſecrecy, on which he ſo fondly leaned, was at an end. Had I acted culpably, or not?

But

But why ſhould I ruminate, with anguiſh and doubt upon the paſt? The future was within my power, and the road of my duty was too plain to be miſtaken. I would diſcloſe to Welbeck the truth, and cheerfully encounter every conſequence. I would ſummon my friend to my aid, and take his counſel in the critical emergency in which I was placed. I ought not to rely upon myſelf alone in my efforts to benefit this being, when another was ſo near, whoſe diſcernment and benevolence, knowledge of mankind and power of affording relief, were far ſuperior to mine.

Influenced by theſe thoughts, I left the apartment without ſpeaking; and, procuring pen and paper, diſpatched to you the billet which brought about our meeting.

CHAP. V.

JUSTIFICATION.

MERVYN'S auditors allowed no pauſe in their attention to this ſtory. Having ended, a deep ſilence took place. The clock which ſtood upon the mantle-piece, had ſounded twice the cuſtomary *larum*, but had not been heard by us; it was now ſtruck a third time —it was *one*. Our gueſt appeared ſomewhat ſtartled at this ſignal, and looked, with a mournful ſort of earneſtneſs, at the clock: there was an air of inquietude about him, which I had never obſerved in an equal degree before.

I was

I was not without much curiosity respecting other incidents than those which had just been related by him; but after so much fatigue as he had undergone, I thought it improper to prolong the conversation.

"Come," said I, "my friend, let us retire: this is a drowsy time, and after so much exercise of mind and body, you cannot but need some repose. Much has happened in your absence which is proper to be known to you, but our discourse will be best deferred till to-morrow: I will come into your chamber by day-dawn, and unfold to you my particular."

"Nay," said he, "withdraw not on my account. If I go to my chamber, it will not be to sleep, but to meditate, especially after your assurance that something of moment has occurred in my absence. My thoughts, independently of any cause of sorrow or fear, have received an impulse which solitude and darkness will not stop: it is impossible to know too much for our

ſafety and integrity, or to know it too ſoon. What has happened?"

I did not heſitate to comply with his requeſt; for it was not difficult to conceive that, however tired the limbs might be, the adventures of this day would not be eaſily expelled from the memory at night. I told him the ſubſtance of the converſation with Mrs. Althorpe. He ſmiled at thoſe parts of the narrative which related to himſelf; but when his father's depravity and poverty were mentioned, he melted into tears.

"Poor wretch! I that knew thee in thy better days, might have eaſily divined this conſequence: I foreſaw thy poverty and degradation in the ſame hour that I left thy roof—my ſoul drooped at the proſpect; but I ſaid—'It cannot be prevented;' and this reflection was an antidote to grief: but now that thy ruin is complete, it ſeems as if ſome of it were imputable to me, who forſook thee when the ſuccour and counſel of a ſon were moſt needed. Thou art ignorant and vicious, but thou art my father ſtill. I ſee that

that the ſufferings of a better man than thou art, would leſs afflict me than thine. Perhaps it is ſtill in my power to reſtore thy liberty and good name; and yet—that is a fond wiſh. Thou art paſt the age when the ignorance and grovelling habits of a human being are ſuſceptible of cure."

There he ſtopped; and after a gloomy pauſe, continued.

I am not ſurpriſed or afflicted at the miſconceptions of my neighbours, with relation to my own character: men muſt judge from what they ſee; they muſt build their concluſions on their knowledge. I never ſaw in the rebukes of my neighbours any thing but laudable abhorrence of vice; they were not eager to blame, to collect materials of cenſure rather than of praiſe: it was not I whom they hated and deſpiſed—it was the phantom that paſſed under my name, which exiſted only in their imagination, and which was worthy of all their ſcorn and all their enmity.

What I appeared to be in their eyes, was as much the object of my own diſapprobation

probation as of their's. Their reproaches only evinced the rectitude of their decisions as well as of my own. I drew from them new motives to complacency: they fortified my perseverance in the path which I had chosen as best; they raised me higher in my own esteem; they heightened the claims of the reproachers themselves to my respect and my gratitude.

They thought me slothful, incurious, destitute of knowledge, and of all thirst of knowledge, insolent, and profligate. They say that in the treatment of my father, I have been ungrateful and inhuman; I have stolen his property, and deserted him in his calamity: therefore they hate and revile me. It is well: I love them for these proofs of their discernment and integrity; their indignation at the wrong is the truest test of their virtue.

It is true that they mistake me; but that arises from the circumstances of our mutual situation. They examined what was exposed to their view; they grasped at what

what was placed within their reach: to decide contrary to appearances—to judge from what they know not, would prove them to be brutiſh, and not rational—would make their deciſion of no worth, and render them, in their turn, objects of neglect and contempt.

It is true that I hated ſchool—that I fought occaſions of abſence, and, finally, on being ſtruck by the maſter, determined to enter his preſence no more. I loved to leap, to run, to ſwim, to climb trees, and to clamber up rocks, to ſhroud myſelf in thickets, and ſtroll among woods, to obey the impulſe of the moment, and to prate or be ſilent, juſt as my humour prompted me: all this I loved more than to go to and fro in the ſame path, and at ſtated hours to look off and on a book, to read juſt as much, and of ſuch a kind, to ſtand up and be ſeated, as another thought proper to direct. I hated to be claſſed, cribbed, rebuked, and feruled at the pleaſure of one who, as it ſeemed to me, knew no guide in his rewards

but

but caprice, and no prompter in his punifhments but paffion.

It is true that I took up the fpade and the hoe as rarely, and for as fhort a time as poffible. I preferred to ramble in the foreft, and loiter on the hill; perpetually to change the fcene—to fcrutinize the endlefs variety of objects—to compare one leaf and pebble with another—to purfue thofe trains of thought which their refemblances and differences fuggefted—to enquire what it was that gave them this place, ftructure, and form, were more agreeable employments than ploughing and thrafhing.

My father could well afford to hire labour: what my age and my conftitution enabled me to do, could be done by a fturdy boy in half the time, with half the toil, and with none of the reluctance. The boy was a bond-fervant, and the coft of his clothing and food was next to nothing. True it is, that my fervice would have faved him even this expence; but my motives for declining the effort were not haftily weighed or fuperficially

ſuperficially examined. Theſe were my motives:—my frame was delicate and feeble; expoſure to wet blaſts and vertical ſuns was ſure to make me ſick. My father was inſenſible to this conſequence; and no degree of diligence would pleaſe him, but that which would deſtroy my health. My health was dearer to my mother than to me; ſhe was more anxious to exempt me from poſſible injuries than reaſon juſtified; but anxious ſhe was, and I could not ſave her from anxiety, but by almoſt wholly abſtaining from labour. I thought her peace of mind was of ſome value, and that if the inclination of either of my parents muſt be gratified at the expence of the other, the preference was due to the woman who bore me—who nurſed me in diſeaſe—who watched over my ſafety with inceſſant tenderneſs—whoſe life and whoſe peace were involved in mine. I ſhould have deemed myſelf brutiſh and obdurately wicked to have loaded her with fears and cares, merely to ſmooth the brow of a froward old man, whoſe avarice called on

on me to ſacrifice my eaſe and my health, and who ſhifted to other ſhoulders the province of ſuſtaining me when ſick, and of mourning for me when dead.

I likewiſe believed that it became me to reflect upon the influence of my deciſion on my own happineſs, and to weigh the profits flowing to my father from my labour, againſt the benefits of mental exerciſe, the pleaſures of the woods and ſtreams, healthful ſenſations, and the luxury of muſing. The pecuniary profit was petty and contemptible; it obviated no neceſſity—it purchaſed no rational enjoyment; it merely provoked, by furniſhing the means of indulgence, an appetite from which my father was not exempt; it cheriſhed the ſeeds of depravity in him, and leſſened the little ſtock of happineſs belonging to my mother.

I did not detain you long, my friends, in portraying my parents, and recounting domeſtic incidents, when I firſt told you my ſtory;—what had no connection with the hiſtory of Welbeck, and with the part that I have

I have acted upon this ſtage, I thought it proper to omit. My omiſſion was likewiſe prompted by other reaſons. My mind is enervated and feeble like my body: I cannot look upon the ſufferings of thoſe I love without exquiſite pain; I cannot ſteel my heart by the force of reaſon, and by ſubmiſſion to neceſſity; and therefore too frequently employ the cowardly expedient of endeavouring to forget what I cannot remember without agony.

I told you that my father was ſober and induſtrious by habit; but habit is not uniform:—there were intervals when his plodding and tame ſpirit gave place to the malice and fury of a demon. Liquors were not ſought by him, but he could not withſtand entreaty; and a potion that produced no effect upon others, changed him into a maniac.

I told you that I had a ſiſter whom the arts of a villain deſtroyed. Alas! the work of her deſtruction was left unfiniſhed by him! The blows and contumelies of a misjudging and implacable parent, who ſcrupled not to thruſt her, with her new-born infant, out of doors—

doors—the curſes and taunts of unnatural brothers left her no alternative but death!—But I muſt not think of this—I muſt not think of the wrongs which my mother endured in the perſon of her only and darling daughter.

My brothers were the copyiſts of the father whom they reſembled in temper and perſon. My mother doted on her own image in her daughter and in me. This daughter was raviſhed from her by ſelf-violence, and her other children by diſeaſe. I only remained to appropriate her affections, and fulfil her hopes. This alone had furniſhed a ſufficient reaſon why I ſhould be careful of my health and my life; but my father's character ſupplied me with a motive infinitely more cogent.

It is almoſt incredible, but nevertheleſs true, that the only being whoſe preſence and remonſtrances had any influence on my father at moments when his reaſon was extinct, was myſelf. As to my perſonal ſtrength, it was nothing; yet my mother's perſon was

reſcued

reſcued from brutal violence—he was checked in the midſt of his ferocious career by a ſingle look or exclamation from me. The fear of my rebukes had even ſome influence in enabling him to reſiſt temptation: if I entered the tavern at the moment when he was lifting the glaſs to his lips, I never weighed the injunctions of decorum, but, ſnatching the veſſel from his hand, I threw it on the ground. I was not deterred by the preſence of others; and their cenſures on my want of filial reſpect and duty were liſtened to with unconcern:—I choſe not to juſtify myſelf by expatiating on domeſtic miſeries, and by calling down that pity on my mother which I knew would only have increaſed her diſtreſs.

The world regarded my deportment as inſolent and perverſe to a degree of inſanity. To deny my father an indulgence which they thought harmleſs, and which indeed was harmleſs in its influence on other men—to interfere thus publicly with his ſocial enjoyments, and expoſe him to mortification and ſhame,

ſhame, was loudly condemned; but my duty to my mother debarred me from eluding this cenſure on the only terms on which it could have been eluded. Now it has ceaſed to be neceſſary to conceal what paſſed in domeſtic retirements, and I ſhould willingly confeſs the truth before any audience.

At firſt, my father imagined that threats and blows would intimidate his monitor:—in this he was miſtaken; and the detection of this miſtake impreſſed him with an involuntary reverence for me, which ſet bounds to thoſe exceſſes which diſdained any other controul. Hence I derived new motives for cheriſhing a life which was uſeful in ſo many ways to my mother.

My condition is now changed: I am no longer on that field to which the law, as well as reaſon, muſt acknowledge that I had ſome right while there was any in my father. I muſt hazard my life, if need be, in the purſuit of the means of honeſt ſubſiſtence: I never ſpared myſelf while in the

ſervice of Mr. Hadwin; and at a more inclement ſeaſon, ſhould probably have incurred ſome hazard by my diligence.

Theſe were the motives of my *idleneſs*, for my abſtaining from the common toils of the farm paſſed by that name among my neighbours; though, in truth, my time was far from being wholly unoccupied by manual employments; but theſe required leſs exertion of body or mind, or were more connected with intellectual efforts: they were purſued in the ſecluſion of my chamber, or the receſſes of a wood. I did not labour to conceal them, but neither was I anxious to attract notice; it was ſufficient that the cenſure of my neighbours was unmerited, to make me regard it with indifference.

I ſought not the ſociety of perſons of my own age, not from ſullen or unſociable habits, but merely becauſe thoſe around me were totally unlike myſelf; their taſtes and occupations were incompatible with mine. In my few books, in my pen, in the vegetable

vegetable and animal exiſtences around me, I found companions who adapted their viſits and intercourſe to my convenience and caprice, and with whom I was never tired of communing.

I was not unaware of the opinion which my neighbours had formed of my being improperly connected with Betty Lawrence. I am not ſorry that I fell into company with that girl. Her intercourſe has inſtructed me in what ſome would think impoſſible to be attained by one who had never haunted the impure receſſes of licentiouſneſs in a city: the knowledge which reſidence in this town for ten years gave her audacious and inquiſitive ſpirit, ſhe imparted to me. Her character, profligate and artful, libidinous and impudent, and made up of the impreſſions which a city life had produced on her coarſe but active mind, was open to my ſtudy, and I ſtudied it.

I ſcarcely know how to repel the charge of illicit conduct, and to depict the exact ſpecies of intercourſe ſubſiſting between us.

I always

I always treated her with freedom, and sometimes with gaiety. I had no motives to reserve: I was so formed, that a creature like her had no power over my senses;—that species of temptation adapted to entice me from the true path, was widely different from the artifices of Betty. There was no point at which it was possible for her to get possession of my fancy; I watched her while she practised all her tricks and blandishments, just as I regarded a similar deportment in the *animal falax ignavumque* which inhabits the sty. I made efforts to pursue my observations unembarrassed; but my efforts were made, not to restrain desire, but to suppress disgust; the difficulty lay, not in withholding my caresses, but in forbearing to repulse her with rage.

"Decorum, indeed, was not outraged, and all limits were not overstepped at once. Dubious advances were employed; but when found unavailing, were displaced by more shameless and direct proceedings. She was too little versed in human nature to see that

her laſt expedient was always worſe than the preceding; and that, in proportion as ſhe loſt ſight of decency, ſhe multiplied the obſtacles to her ſucceſs.

"Betty had many enticements in perſon and air; ſhe was ruddy, ſmooth, and plump: to theſe ſhe added—I muſt not ſay what, for it is ſtrange to what lengths a woman deſtitute of modeſty will ſometimes go; but all her artifices availing her not at all in the conteſt with my inſenſibilities, ſhe reſorted to extremes which it would ſerve no good purpoſe to deſcribe in this audience. They produced not the conſequences ſhe wiſhed; but they produced another, which was by no means diſpleaſing to her. An incident one night occurred, from which a ſagacious obſerver deduced the exiſtence of an intrigue. It was uſeleſs to attempt to rectify his miſtake by explaining appearances in a manner conſiſtent with my innocence; this mode of explication implied a *continence* in me which he denied to be poſſible. The ſtandard of poſſibilities, eſpecially

cially in vice and virtue, is fashioned by most men after their own character. A temptation which this judge of human nature knew that *he* was unable to resist, he sagely concluded to be irresistible by any other man; and quickly established the belief among my neighbours that the woman who married the father, had been prostituted to the son. Though I never admitted the truth of this aspersion, I believe it useless to deny it; because no one would credit my denial, and because I had no power to disprove it.

CHAP. VI.

DEATH OF A VILLAIN.

WHAT other enquiries were to be reſolved by our young friend we were now, at this late hour, obliged to poſtpone till the morrow. I ſhall paſs over the reflections which a ſtory like this would naturally ſuggeſt, and haſten to our next interview.

After breakfaſt next morning, the ſubject of laſt night's converſation was renewed. I told him that ſomething had occurred in his abſence, in relation to Mrs. Wentworth and her nephew, that had perplexed us not a little.—"My information is obtained," continued

tinued I, " from Wortley ; and it is nothing leſs than that young Clavering, Mrs. Wentworth's nephew, is at this time actually alive."

Surpriſe, but none of the embarraſſment of guilt, appeared in his countenance at theſe tidings. He looked at me as if deſirous that I ſhould proceed.

" It ſeems," added I, " that a letter was lately received by this lady from the father of Clavering, who is now in Europe. This letter reports that his ſon was lately met with in Charleſton, and relates the means which old Mr. Clavering had uſed to prevail upon his ſon to return home—means, of the ſucceſs of which he entertained well-grounded hopes. What think you?"

" I can only reject it," ſaid he, after ſome pauſe, " as untrue. The father's correſpondent may have been deceived. The father may have been deceived, or the father may conceive it neceſſary to deceive the aunt; or ſome other ſuppoſition, as to the ſource of the error, may be true; but an error it

ſurely is. Clavering is not alive. I know the chamber where he died, and the withered pine under which he lies buried."

"If ſhe be deceived," ſaid I, "it will be impoſſible to rectify her error."

"I hope not: an honeſt front and a ſtraight ſtory will be ſufficient."

"How do you mean to act?"

"Viſit her without doubt, and tell her the truth. My tale will be too circumſtantial and conſiſtent to permit her to diſbelieve it."

"She will not hearken to you. She is too ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed againſt you to admit you even to a hearing."

"She cannot help it: unleſs ſhe lock her door againſt me, or ſtuff her ears with wool, ſhe muſt hear me. Her prepoſſeſſions are reaſonable, but are eaſily removed by telling the truth. Why does ſhe ſuſpect me of artifice? Becauſe I ſeemed to be allied to Welbeck, and becauſe I diſguiſed the truth. That ſhe thinks ill of me is not her fault, but my misfortune; and, happily for me, a misfortune eaſily removed."

"Then

"Then you will try to ſee her?"

"I will ſee her, and the ſooner the better. I will ſee her to-day, this morning, as ſoon as I have ſeen Welbeck, whom I ſhall immediately viſit in his priſon."

"There are other embarraſſments and dangers, of which you are not aware: Welbeck is purſued by many perſons whom he has defrauded of large ſums. By theſe perſons you are deemed an accomplice in his guilt, and a warrant is already in the hands of officers for arreſting you wherever you are found."

"In what way," ſaid Mervyn, ſedately, "do they imagine me a partaker of his crime?"

"I know not. You lived with him; you fled with him; you aided and connived at his eſcape."

"Are theſe crimes?"

"I believe not, but they ſubject you to ſuſpicion."

"To arreſt and to puniſhment?"

"To detention for a while, perhaps. But theſe alone cannot expoſe you to puniſhment."

"I thought ſo. Then I have nothing to fear."

"You have impriſonment and obloquy, at leaſt, to dread."

"True; but they cannot be avoided but by exile and ſkulking out of ſight—evils infinitely more formidable. I ſhall therefore not avoid them. The ſooner my conduct be ſubjected to ſcrutiny, the better. Will you go with me to Welbeck?"

"I will go with you."

Enquiring for Welbeck of the keeper of the priſon, we were informed that he was in his own apartment very ſick. The phyſician attending the priſon had been called; but the priſoner had preſerved an obſtinate and ſcornful ſilence, and had neither explained his condition, nor conſented to accept any aid.

We now went alone into his apartment. His ſenſibility ſeemed faſt ebbing, yet an emotion

emotion of joy was viſible in his eyes at the appearance of Mervyn. He ſeemed likewiſe to recogniſe in me his late viſitant, and made no objection to my entrance.

"How are you this morning?" ſaid Arthur, ſeating himſelf on the bedſide, and taking his hand.

The ſick man was ſcarcely able to articulate his reply—"I ſhall ſoon be well. I have longed to ſee you. I want to leave with you a few words."—He now caſt his languid eyes on me.—"You are his friend," he continued: "you know all; you may ſtay."

There now ſucceeded a long pauſe, during which he cloſed his eyes, and reſigned himſelf as if to an oblivion of all thought. His pulſe under my hand was ſcarcely perceptible. From this in ſome minutes he recovered, and fixing his eyes on Mervyn, reſumed, in a broken and feeble accent—

"Clemenza! You have ſeen her. Weeks ago I left her in an accurſed houſe; yet ſhe has not been ill-treated—neglected

and abandoned indeed, but not ill-treated. Save her, Mervyn; comfort her—awaken charity for her ſake. I cannot tell you what has happened:—the tale would be too long, too mournful; yet in juſtice to the living, I muſt tell you ſomething. My woes and my crimes will be buried with me: ſome of them, but not all. Ere this, I ſhould have been many leagues upon the ocean, had not a newſpaper fallen into my hands while on the eve of embarkation. By that I learned that a treaſure was buried with the remains of the ill-fated Watſon. I was deſtitute: I was unjuſt enough to wiſh to make this treaſure my own. Prone to think I was forgotten, or numbered with the victims of peſtilence, I ventured to return under a careleſs diſguiſe. I penetrated to the vaults of that deſerted dwelling by night: I dug up the bones of my friend, and found the girdle and its valuable contents, according to the accurate deſcription that I had read. I haſtened back with my prize to Baltimore, but my evil deſtiny overtook me at laſt. I

was

was recogniſed by the emiſſaries of Jamieſon, arreſted, and brought hither; and here ſhall I conſummate my fate, and defeat the rage of my creditors by death. But firſt——"

Here Welbeck ſtretched out his left hand to Mervyn, and, after ſome reluctance, ſhewed a roll of lead.

"Receive this," ſaid he. "In the uſe of it be guided by your honeſty and by the ſame advertiſement that furniſhed me the clue by which to recover it. That being ſecured, the world and I will part for ever. Withdraw, for your preſence can help me nothing."

We were unwilling to comply with his injunction, and continued ſome longer time in his chamber; but our kind intent availed nothing: he quickly relapſed into inſenſibility, from which he recovered not again, but next day expired. Such, in the flower of his age, was the fate of Thomas Welbeck.

Whatever intereſt I might feel in accompanying the progreſs of my young friend, a ſudden and unforeſeen emergency com-

pelled me again to leave the city. A kinſman, to whom I was bound by many obligations, was ſuffering a lingering diſeaſe; and imagining, with ſome reaſon, his diſſolution to be not far diſtant, he beſought my company and my aſſiſtance to ſooth, at leaſt, the agonies of his laſt hour. I was anxious to clear up the myſteries which Arthur's conduct had produced, and to ſhield him, if poſſible, from the evils which I feared awaited him. It was impoſſible, however, to decline the invitation of my kinſman, as his reſidence was not a day's journey from the city. I was obliged to content myſelf with occaſional information, imparted by Mervyn's letters, or thoſe of my wife.

Meanwhile, on leaving the priſon, I haſtened to inform Mervyn of the true nature of the ſcene which had juſt paſſed. By this extraordinary occurrence, the property of the Maurices was now in honeſt hands. Welbeck, ſtimulated by ſelfiſh motives, had done that which any other perſon would have

have found encompaſſed with formidable dangers and difficulties. How this attempt was ſuggeſted or executed, he had not informed us, nor was it deſirable to know. It was ſufficient that the means of reſtoring their own to a deſtitute and meritorious family were now in our poſſeſſion.

Having returned home, I unfolded to Mervyn all the particulars reſpecting Williams and the Maurices, which I had lately learned from Wortley. He liſtened with deep attention, and my ſtory being finiſhed, he ſaid—

"In this ſmall compaſs, then, is the patrimony and ſubſiſtence of a numerous family. To reſtore it to them is the obvious proceeding; but how?—Where do they abide?"

"Williams and Watſon's wives live in Baltimore, and the Maurices live near that town. The advertiſements alluded to by Wortley, and which are to be found in any newſpaper, will inform us. But, firſt, are we

ſure that any or all of theſe bills are contained in this covering?"

The lead was now unrolled, and the bills which Williams had deſcribed, were found encloſed. Nothing appeared to be deficient. Of this, however, we were ſcarcely qualified to judge. Thoſe that were the property of Williams might not be entire; and what would be the conſequence of preſenting them to him, if any had been embezzled by Welbeck?

This difficulty was obviated by Mervyn, who obſerved that the advertiſement, deſcribing theſe bills, would afford us ample information on this head.—"Having found out where the Maurices and Mrs. Watſon live, nothing remains but to viſit them, and put an end, as far as lies in my power, to their inquietudes."

"What, would you go to Baltimore!"

"Certainly: can any other expedient be proper? How ſhall I otherwiſe enſure the ſafe conveyance of theſe papers?"

"You may ſend them by the poſt."

"But

"But why not go myſelf?"

"I can hardly tell, unleſs your appearance on ſuch an errand may be ſuſpected likely to involve you in embarraſſments."

"What embarraſſments? If they receive their own, ought they not to be ſatisfied?"

"The enquiry will naturally be made as to the manner of gaining poſſeſſion of theſe papers. They were lately in the hands of Watſon; but Watſon has diſappeared. Suſpicions are awake reſpecting the cauſe of his diſappearance. Theſe ſuſpicions are connected with Welbeck, and Welbeck's connection with you is not unknown."

"Theſe are evils, but I ſee not how an ingenuous and open conduct is adapted to increaſe theſe evils. If they come, I muſt endure them."

"I believe your deciſion is right. No one is ſo ſkilful an advocate in a cauſe, as he whoſe cauſe it is. I rely upon your ſkill and addreſs, and ſhall leave you to purſue your own way. I muſt leave you for a time,

time, but ſhall expect to be punctually informed of all that paſſes."

With this agreement we parted, and I haſtened to perform my intended journey.

CHAP. VII.

A PROPOSAL REJECTED.

I AM glad, my friend, my nimble pen has got ſo far upon its journey. What remains of my ſtory may be diſpatched in a trice. I have juſt now ſome vacant hours, which might poſſibly be more uſefully employed, but not in an eaſier manner or more pleaſant. So, let me carry on the thread.

Firſt,

Firſt, let me mention the reſolutions I had formed at the time I parted with my friend. I had ſeveral objects in view. One was a conference with Mrs. Wentworth; another was an interview with her whom I met with at Villars's. My heart melted when I thought upon the deſolate condition of Clemenza, and determined me to direct my firſt efforts for her relief. For this end I was to viſit the female who had given me a direction to her houſe. The name of this perſon is Achſa Fielding, and ſhe lived, according to her own direction, at No, 40, Walnut-Street.

I went thither without delay. She was not at home. Having gained information from the ſervant, as to when ſhe might be found, I proceeded to Mrs. Wentworth's. In going thither, my mind was deeply occupied in meditation; and, with my uſual careleſſneſs of forms, I entered the houſe, and made my way to the parlour, where an interview had formerly taken place between us.

Having

Having arrived, I began, though somewhat unſeaſonably, to reflect upon the topics with which I ſhould introduce my converſation, and particularly the manner in which I ſhould introduce myſelf. I had opened doors without warning, and traverſed paſſages without being noticed. This had ariſen from my thoughtleſſneſs. There was no one within hearing or ſight. What was next to be done? Should I not return ſoftly to the outer door, and ſummon the ſervant by knocking?

Preparing to do this, I heard a footſtep in the entry, which ſuſpended my deſign. I ſtood in the middle of the floor, attentive to theſe movements, when preſently the door opened, and there entered the apartment Mrs. Wentworth herſelf! She came, as it ſeemed, without expectation of finding any one there. When, therefore, the figure of a man caught her vagrant attention, ſhe ſtarted, and caſt a haſty look towards me.

"Pray," ſaid ſhe in a peremptory tone, "how

"how came you here, Sir?—and what is your buſineſs?"

Neither arrogance on the one hand, nor humility on the other, had any part in modelling my deportment. I came not to deprecate anger, or exult over diſtreſs: I anſwered, therefore, diſtinctly, firmly, and erectly—

"I came to ſee you, Madam, and converſe with you; but, being buſy with other thoughts, I forgot to knock at the door. No evil was intended by my negligence, though propriety has certainly not been obſerved. Will you pardon this intruſion, and condeſcend to grant me your attention?"

"To what? What have you to ſay to me? I know you only as the accomplice of a villain in an attempt to deceive me. There is nothing to juſtify your coming hither, and I deſire you to leave the houſe with as little ceremony as you entered it."

My eyes were lowered at this rebuke, yet I did not obey the command.

"Your

"Your treatment of me, Madam, is such as I appear to you to deserve. Appearances are unfavourable to me, but those appearances are false. I have concurred in no plot against your reputation or your fortune. I have told you nothing but the truth. I came hither to promote no selfish or sinister purpose. I have no favour to entreat, and no petition to offer, but that you will suffer me to clear up those mistakes which you have harboured respecting me. I am poor; I am destitute of fame and of kindred; I have nothing to console me in obscurity and indigence, but the approbation of my own heart, and the good opinion of those who know me as I am. The good may be led to despise and condemn me. Their aversion and scorn shall not make me unhappy; but it is my interest and my duty to rectify their error if I can. I regard your character with esteem. You have been mistaken in condemning me as a liar and impostor, and I came to remove this mistake. I came, if not to procure your esteem, at least to take away hatred

hatred and ſuſpicion. But this is not all my purpoſe.—You are in an error in relation not only to my character, but to the ſituation of your nephew Clavering. I formerly told you that I ſaw him die, that I aſſiſted at his burial; but my tale was incoherent and imperfect, and you have ſince received intelligence, to which you think proper to truſt, and which aſſures you that he is ſtill living. All I now aſk is your attention, while I relate the particulars of my knowledge. Proof of my veracity or innocence may be of no value in your eyes, but the fate of your nephew ought to be known to you. Certainty on this head may be of much importance to your happineſs, and to the regulation of your future conduct. To hear me patiently can do you no injury, and may benefit you much. Will you permit me to go on?"

During this addreſs, little abatement of reſentment and ſcorn was viſible in my companion.

"I will hear you," ſhe replied. "Your invention

invention may amuſe, if it does not edify. But, I pray you, let your ſtory be ſhort."

I was obliged to be content with this ungraceful conceſſion, and proceeded to begin my narration. I deſcribed the ſituation of my father's dwelling; I mentioned the year, month, day, and hour of her nephew's appearance among us; I expatiated minutely on his form, features, dreſs, ſound of his voice, and repeated his words: his favourite geſtures and attitudes were faithfully deſcribed.

I had gone but a little way in my ſtory, when the effects were viſible in her demeanour which I expected from it. Her knowledge of the youth, and of the time and manner of his diſappearance, made it impoſſible for me, with ſo minute a narrative, to impoſe upon her credulity. Every word, every incident related, atteſted my truth, by their agreement with what ſhe herſelf previouſly knew.

Her ſuſpicions and angry watchfulneſs were quickly exchanged for downcaſt looks and ſtealing tears, and ſighs difficultly repreſſed.

repreſſed. Meanwhile, I did not pauſe, but deſcribed the treatment he received from my mother's tenderneſs, his occupations, the freaks of his inſanity, and, finally, the circumſtances of his death and funeral.

Thence I haſtened to the circumſtances which brought me to the city, which placed me in the ſervice of Welbeck, and obliged me to perform ſo ambiguous a part in her preſence. I left no difficulty to be ſolved, and no queſtion unanticipated.

"I have now finiſhed my ſtory," I continued, "and accompliſhed my deſign in coming hither. Whether I have vindicated my integrity from your ſuſpicions, I know not. I have done what in me lay to remove your error; and in that, have done my duty. What more remains? Any enquiries you are pleaſed to make, I am ready to anſwer. If there be none to make, I will comply with your former commands, and leave the houſe with as little ceremony as I entered it."

"Your ſtory," ſhe replied, "has been unexpected.

unexpected. I believe it fully, and am ſorry for the hard thoughts which paſt appearances have made me entertain concerning you."

Here ſhe ſunk into mournful ſilence.

"The information," ſhe at length reſumed, "which I have received from another quarter reſpecting that unfortunate youth, aſtoniſhes and perplexes me. It is inconſiſtent with your ſtory, but it muſt be founded on ſome miſtake, which I am at preſent unable to unravel. Welbeck, whoſe connection has been ſo unfortunate to you——"

"Unfortunate!—Dear Madam, how unfortunate? It has done away a part of my ignorance of the world in which I live; it has led me to the ſituation in which I am now placed; it has introduced me to the knowledge of many good people; it has made me the witneſs and the ſubject of many acts of beneficence and generoſity. My knowledge of Welbeck has been uſeful to me—it has enabled me to be uſeful to others.

others. I look back upon that allotment of my deſtiny which firſt led me to his door, with gratitude and pleaſure. Would to Heaven," continued I, ſomewhat changing my tone, "intercourſe with Welbeck had been as harmleſs to all others as it has been to me: that no injury to fortune, and fame, and innocence, and life, had been incurred by others greater than has fallen upon my head. There is one being, whoſe connection with him has not been utterly diſſimilar, in its origin and circumſtances, to mine; though the cataſtrophe has, indeed, been widely and mournfully different. And yet within this moment a thought has occurred, from which I derive ſome conſolation and ſome hope. You, dear Madam, are rich: theſe ſpacious apartments, this plentiful accommodation are your's; you have enough for your own gratification and convenience, and ſomewhat to ſpare. Will you take to your protecting arms, to your hoſpitable roof, an unhappy girl, whom the arts of Welbeck have robbed of fortune, reputation,

and honour, who is now languiſhing in poverty, weeping over the lifeleſs remains of her babe, ſurrounded by the agents of vice, and trembling on the verge of infamy?"

"What can this mean?" replied the lady. "Of whom do you ſpeak?"

"You ſhall know her; you ſhall be apprized of her claims to your compaſſion. Her ſtory, as far as it is known to me, I will faithfully repeat to you. She is a ſtranger—an Italian: her name is Clemenza Lodi."

"Clemenza Lodi! Good Heaven!" exclaimed Mrs. Wentworth. "Why ſurely it cannot be! And yet——Is it poſſible that you are that perſon?"

"I do not comprehend you, Madam."

"A friend has related a tranſaction of a ſtrange ſort. It is ſcarcely an hour ſince ſhe told it me. The name of Clemenza Lodi was mentioned in it, and a young man of moſt ſingular deportment was deſcribed. But tell me how you were engaged on Thurſday morning?"

"I was coming to this city from a diſtance.

tance. I ſtopped ten minutes at the houſe of——"

"Mrs. Villars?"

"The ſame. Perhaps you know her and her character—perhaps you can confirm or rectify my preſent opinions concerning her. It is there that the unfortunate Clemenza abides: it is thence that I wiſh her to be ſpeedily removed."

"I have heard of you—of your conduct upon that occaſion"

"Of me!" anſwered I eagerly. "Do you know that lady?"

So ſaying, I produced the card which I had received from her, and on which her name was written.

"I know her well. She is my country-woman and my friend."

"Your friend! Then ſhe is good—ſhe is innocent—ſhe is generous. Will ſhe be a ſiſter, a protectreſs to Clemenza? Will you exhort her to a deed of charity? Will you be yourſelf an example of beneficence? Direct me to Miſs Fielding, I beſeech you. I have

called on her already, but in vain, and there is no time to be loſt."

"Why are you ſo precipitate? What would you do?"

"Take her away from that houſe inſtantly —bring her hither—place her under your protection—give her Mrs. Wentworth for a counſellor, a friend, a mother. Shall I do this? Shall I go thither to-day—this very hour—now? Give me your conſent, and ſhe ſhall be with you before noon."

"By no means," replied ſhe with earneſtneſs. "You are too haſty. An affair of ſo much importance cannot be diſpatched in a moment; there are many difficulties and doubts to be firſt removed."

"Let them be reſerved for the future. Withhold not your helping hand till the ſtruggler has diſappeared for ever. Think on the gulf that is already gaping to ſwallow her: this is no time to heſitate and falter. I will tell you her ſtory, but not now; we will poſtpone it till to-morrow, and firſt ſecure her from impending evils.

She

She ſhall tell it you herſelf; in an hour I will bring her hither, and ſhe herſelf ſhall recount to you her ſorrows. Will you let me?"

"Your behaviour is extraordinary; I can ſcarcely tell whether this ſimplicity be real or affected:—one would think that your common ſenſe would ſhew you the impropriety of your requeſt. To admit under my roof a woman notoriouſly diſhonoured, and from an infamous houſe——"

"My deareſt Madam! how can you reflect upon the ſituation without irreſiſtible pity? I ſee that you are thoroughly aware of her paſt calamity and her preſent danger. Do not theſe urge you to make haſte to her relief? Can any lot be more deplorable than her's? Can any ſtate be more perilous? Poverty is not the only evil that oppreſſes, or that threatens her: the ſcorn of the world, and her own compunction, the death of the fruit of her error, and the witneſs of her ſhame, are not the worſt. She is expoſed to the temptations of the profligate; while ſhe remains with Mrs. Villars, her infamy accu-

mulates—her further debaſement is facilitated—her return to reputation and to virtue is obſtructed by new bars."

"How know I that her debaſement is not already complete and irremediable? She is a mother, but not a wife. How came ſhe thus? Is her being Welbeck's proſtitute no proof of her guilt?"

"Alas! I know not!—I believe her not very culpable; I know her to be unfortunate—to have been robbed and betrayed. You are a ſtranger to her hiſtory. I am myſelf imperfectly acquainted with it.

"But let me tell you the little that I know. Perhaps my narrative may cauſe you to think of her as I do"

She did not object to this propoſal; and I immediately recounted all that I had gained from my own obſervations, or from Welbeck himſelf, reſpecting this forlorn girl. Having finiſhed my narrative, I proceeded thus:—

"Can you heſitate to employ that power which was given you for good ends, to reſcue this

this ſufferer? Take her to your home—to your boſom—to your confidence. Keep aloof thoſe temptations which beſet her in her preſent ſituation; reſtore her to that purity which her deſolate condition, her ignorance, her miſplaced gratitude, and the artifices of a ſkilful diſſembler have deſtroyed, if it be deſtroyed; for how know we under what circumſtances her ruin was accompliſhed?—with what pretences, or appearances, or promiſes ſhe was won to compliance?"

"True, I confeſs my ignorance: but ought not that ignorance to be removed before ſhe makes a part of my family?"

"Oh, no! It may be afterwards removed; it cannot be removed before. By bringing her hither, you ſhield her at leaſt from future and poſſible evils; here you can watch her conduct, and ſift her ſentiments conveniently and at leiſure. Should ſhe prove worthy of your charity, how juſtly may you congratulate yourſelf on your ſeaſonable efforts in her cauſe? If ſhe prove unworthy,

you may then demean yourſelf according to her demerits."

"I muſt reflect upon it. To-morrow ——"

"Let me prevail on you to admit her at once, and without delay. This very moment may be the critical one; to-day we may exert ourſelves with ſucceſs, but to-morrow all our efforts may be fruitleſs. Why fluctuate, why linger, when ſo much good may be done, and no evil can poſſibly be incurred? It requires but a word from you; you need not move a finger. Your houſe is large; you have chambers vacant and convenient; conſent only that your door ſhall not be barred againſt her—that you will treat her with civility;—to carry your kindneſs into effect, to perſuade her to attend me hither, and to place herſelf under your care, ſhall be my province."

Theſe, and many ſimilar entreaties and reaſonings were ineffectual. Her general diſpoſition was kind; but ſhe was unaccuſtomed to ſtrenuous or ſudden exertions. To admit

admit the perſuaſions of ſuch an advocate to ſo uncommon a ſcheme as that of ſharing her houſe with a creature thus previouſly unknown to her—thus loaded with ſuſpicion and with obloquy, was not poſſible.

I at laſt forbore importunity, and requeſted her to tell me when I might expect to meet with Miſs Fielding at her lodgings. Enquiry was made to what end I ſought an interview. I made no ſecret of my purpoſe.

"Are you mad, young man?" ſhe exclaimed. "Miſs Fielding has already been egregiouſly imprudent. On the faith of an ancient ſlight acquaintance with Mrs. Villars in Europe, ſhe ſuffered herſelf to be decoyed into a viſit. Inſtead of taking warning by numerous tokens of the real character of that woman, in her behaviour, and in that of her viſitants, ſhe conſented to remain there one night. The next morning that aſtoniſhing interview with you took place, which ſhe has ſince deſcribed to me. She is now warned againſt the like indiſcretion.—And

pray what benevolent ſcheme would you propoſe to her?"

"Has ſhe property? Is ſhe rich?"

"She is. Unhappily, perhaps, for her, ſhe is abſolute miſtreſs of her fortune, and has neither guardian nor parent to controul her in the uſe of it."

"Has ſhe virtue? Does ſhe know the value of affluence and a fair fame? and will not ſhe devote a few dollars to reſcue a fellow-creature from indigence, and infamy, and vice? Surely ſhe will. She will hazard nothing by the boon. I will be her almoner; I will provide the wretched ſtranger with food, and raiment, and dwelling; I will pay for all, if Miſs Fielding from her ſuperfluity will ſupply the means. Clemenza ſhall owe life and honour to your friend, till I am able to ſupply the needful ſum from my own ſtock."

While thus ſpeaking, my companion gazed at me with ſtedfaſtneſs.

"I know not what to make of you: your language

language and ideas are thoſe of a lunatic. Are you acquainted with Miſs Fielding?"

"Yes. I ſaw her two days ago, and ſhe has invited me to ſee her again."

"And on the ſtrength of this acquaintance, you expect to be her almoner—to be the medium of her charity?"

"I deſire to ſave her trouble—to make charity as light and eaſy as poſſible. 'Twill be better if ſhe perform thoſe offices herſelf; 'twill redound more to the credit of her reaſon and her virtue: but I ſolicit her benignity only in the cauſe of Clemenza; for her only do I wiſh at preſent to call forth her generoſity and pity."

"And do you imagine ſhe will entruſt her money to one of your age and ſex, whom ſhe knows ſo imperfectly, to adminiſter to the wants of one whom ſhe found in ſuch a houſe as Mrs. Villars's? She never will. She mentioned her imprudent engagement to meet you; but ſhe is now warned againſt the folly of ſuch confidence.

"You have told me plauſible ſtories of

yourſelf and of this Clemenza. I cannot ſay that I diſbelieve them; but I know the ways of the world too well to beſtow implicit faith ſo eaſily. You are an extraordinary young man. You may poſſibly be honeſt. Such an one as you, with your education and addreſs, may poſſibly have paſſed all your life in a hovel; but it is ſcarcely credible, let me tell you. I believe moſt of the facts reſpecting my nephew, becauſe my knowledge of him before his flight would enable me to detect your falſehood; but there muſt be other proofs beſides an innocent brow and voluble tongue, to make me give full credit to your pretenſions.

"I have no claim upon Welbeck which can embarraſs you; on that ſcore, you are free from any moleſtation from me or my friends. I have ſuſpected you of being an accomplice in ſome vile plot, and am now inclined to acquit you; but that is all that you muſt expect from me, till your character be eſtabliſhed by other means than your own aſſertions. I am engaged at preſent, and

and muſt therefore requeſt you to put an end to your viſit."

This ſtrain was much unlike the ſtrain which preceded it. I imagined, by the mildneſs of her tone and manners, that her unfavourable prepoſſeſſions were removed; but they ſeemed to have ſuddenly regained their priſtine force. I was ſomewhat diſconcerted by this unexpected change. I ſtood for a minute ſilent and irreſolute.

Juſt then a knock was heard at the door, and preſently that very female entered, whom I had met with at Villars's. I caught her figure as I glanced through the window. Mrs. Wentworth darted at me many ſignificant glances, which commanded me to withdraw; but, with this object in view, it was impoſſible.

As ſoon as ſhe entered, her eyes were fixed upon me. Certain recollections naturally occurred at that inſtant, and made her cheeks glow. Some confuſion reigned for a moment, but was quickly diſſipated. She did

did not notice me, but exchanged ſalutations with her friend.

All this while I ſtood near the window, in a ſituation not a little painful. Certain tremors, which I had not been accuſtomed to feel, and which ſeemed to poſſeſs a myſtical relation to the viſitant, diſabled me at once from taking my leave, or from performing any uſeful purpoſe by ſtaying. At length, ſtruggling for compoſure, I approached her, and ſhewing her the card ſhe had given me, ſaid—"Agreeably to this direction, I called an hour ago at your lodgings. I found you not. I hope you will permit me to call once more. When ſhall I expect to meet you at home?"

Her eyes were caſt on the floor. A kind of indirect attention was fixed on Mrs. Wentworth, ſerving to intimidate and check her. At length ſhe ſaid, in an irreſolute voice—"I ſhall be at home this evening."

"And this evening," replied I, "I will call to ſee you."

So

So saying, I left the house.

This interval was tedious; but was to be endured with equanimity. I was impatient to be gone to Baltimore, and hoped to be able to set out by the dawn of next day. Meanwhile, I was necessarily to perform something with respect to Clemenza.

After dinner I accompanied Mrs. Stevens to visit Miss Carlton. I was eager to see a woman who could bear adversity in the manner which my friend had described.

She met us at the door of her apartment. Her seriousness was not abated by her smiles of affability and welcome.

"My friend," whispered I, "how truly lovely is this Miss Carlton! Are the heart and the intelligence within worthy of these features?"

"Yes, they are. Your account of her employments, of her resignation to the ill fate of the brother whom she loves, proves that they are."

My eyes were rivetted to her countenance

and perſon. I felt uncontroulable eagerneſs to ſpeak to her, and to gain her good opinion.

"You muſt know this young man, my dear Miſs Carlton," ſaid my friend, looking at me: "he is my huſband's friend, and profeſſes a great deſire to be your's. You muſt not treat him as a mere ſtranger, for he knows your character and ſituation already, as well as that of your brother."

She looked at me with benignity.

"I accept his friendſhip willingly and gratefully, and ſhall endeavour to convince him that his good opinion is not miſplaced."

There now enſued a converſation ſomewhat general, in which this young woman ſhewed a mind vigorous from exerciſe, and unembarraſſed by care. She affected no concealment of her own condition, of her wants, or her comforts: ſhe laid no ſtreſs upon her misfortunes, but contrived to deduce ſome beneficial conſequence to herſelf, and ſome motive for gratitude to Heaven, from every wayward incident that had befallen her.

This

This demeanour emboldened me, at length, to enquire into the cauſe of her brother's impriſonment, and the nature of his debt.

She anſwered frankly, and without heſitation—"It is a debt of his father's, for which he made himſelf reſponſible during his father's life. The act was generous, but imprudent, as the event has ſhewn; though at the time the unhappy effects could not be foreſeen. My father," continued ſhe, "was arreſted by his creditor, at a time when the calmneſs and comforts of his own dwelling were neceſſary to his health. The creditor was obdurate, and would releaſe him upon no condition, but that of receiving a bond from my brother, by which he engaged to pay the debt at ſeveral ſucceſſive times and in ſmall portions. All theſe inſtalments were diſcharged, with great difficulty indeed, but with ſufficient punctuality, except the laſt, to which my brother's earnings were not adequate."

"How much is the debt?"

"Four hundred dollars."

"And

"And is the ſtate of the creditor ſuch as to make the loſs of four hundred dollars of more importance to him, than the loſs of liberty to your brother?"

She anſwered, ſmiling—"That is a very abſtract view of things. On ſuch a queſtion you and I might, perhaps, eaſily decide in favour of my brother; but would there not be ſome danger of deciding partially? His conduct is a proof of his deciſion, and there is no power to change it."

"Will not argument change it? Methinks in ſo plain a caſe I ſhould be able to convince him. You ſay he is rich and childleſs. His annual income is ten times more than this ſum. Your brother cannot pay the debt while in priſon; whereas, if at liberty, he might ſlowly and finally diſcharge it. If his humanity would not yield, his avarice might be brought to acquieſce."

"But there is another paſſion which you would find it ſomewhat harder to ſubdue, and that is his vengeance. He thinks himſelf wronged, and impriſons my brother, not

to

to enforce payment, but to inflict misery. If you could persuade him that there is no hardship in imprisonment, you would speedily gain the victory; but that could not be attempted consistently with truth. In proportion to my brother's suffering is his gratification."

"You draw an odious and almost incredible portrait."

"And yet such an one as would serve for the likeness of almost every second man we meet."

"And is such your opinion of mankind? Your experience must surely have been of a rueful tenor, to justify such hard thoughts of the rest of your species."

"By no means. It has been what those whose situation disables them from looking further than the surface of things, would regard as unfortunate; but if my goods and evils were equitably balanced, the former would be the weightiest. I have found kindness and goodness in great numbers, but have likewise met prejudice and rancour in many.

many. My opinion of Farquhar is not lightly taken up. I ſaw him yeſterday, and the nature of his motives in the treatment of my brother was plain enough."

Here this topic was ſucceeded by others, and the converſation ceaſed not till the hour had arrived on which I had preconcerted to viſit Miſs Fielding. I left my two friends for this purpoſe.

I was admitted to Miſs Fielding's preſence without ſcruple or difficulty. There were two females in her company, and one of the other ſex, well dreſſed, elderly, and ſedate perſons. Their diſcourſe turned upon political topics, with which, as you know, I have but ſlight acquaintance. They talked of fleets and armies, of Robeſpierre and Pitt, of whom I had only a newſpaper knowledge.

In a ſhort time the women roſe, and putting on their cloaks, diſappeared in company with the gentleman. Being thus left alone with Miſs Fielding, ſome embarraſſment was mutually betrayed. With much heſitation, which however gradually diſappeared,

diſappeared, my companion at length began the converſation.

" You met me lately in a ſituation, Sir, on which I look back with trembling and ſhame, but not with any ſelf-condemnation. I was led into it without any fault, unleſs a too haſty confidence may be ſtyled a fault. I knew Mrs. Villars in England, where ſhe lived with an untainted reputation, at leaſt; and the ſight of my countrywoman in a foreign land awakened emotions, in the indulgence of which I did not imagine there was either any guilt or any danger. She invited me to ſee her at her houſe with ſo much urgency and warmth, and ſolicited me to take a place immediately in a chaiſe in which ſhe had come to the city, that I too incautiouſly complied. You are a ſtranger to me, and I am unacquainted with your character. What little I have ſeen of your deportment, and what little I have lately heard concerning you from Mrs. Wentworth, do not produce unfavourable impreſſions; but the apology I have made was due

to

to my own reputation, and ſhould have been offered to you, whatever your character had been."

There ſhe ſtopped.

"I came not hither," ſaid I, "to receive an apology. Your demeanour, on our firſt interview, ſhielded you ſufficiently from any ſuſpicions or ſurmiſes that I could form. What you have now mentioned was likewiſe mentioned by your friend, and was fully believed upon her authority. My purpoſe in coming, relates not to you, but to another. I deſired merely to intereſt your generoſity and juſtice on behalf of one, whoſe deſtitute and dangerous condition may lay claim to your compaſſion and your ſuccour."

"I comprehend you," ſaid ſhe, with an air of ſome perplexity. "I know the claims of that perſon."

"And will you comply with them?"

"In what manner can I ſerve her?"

"By giving her the means of living."

"Does ſhe not poſſeſs them already?"

"She is deſtitute. Her dependance was wholly

wholly placed upon one th t is dead, by whom her perſon was diſhonoured, and her fortune embezzled."

"But ſhe ſtill lives. She is not turned into the ſtreet—ſhe is not deſtitute of home."

"But what a home?"

"Such as ſhe may chuſe to remain in."

"She cannot chuſe it—ſhe muſt not chuſe it. She remains through ignorance, through the incapacity of leaving it."

"But how can ſhe be perſuaded to a change?"

"I will perſuade her. I will fully explain her ſituation. I will ſupply her with a new home."

"You would perſuade her to go with you, and to live at a home of your providing, and on your bounty?"

"Certainly."

"Would that change be worthy of a cautious perſon? Would it benefit her reputation? Would it prove her love of independence?"

"My

"My purpoſes are good: I know not why ſhe ſhould ſuſpect them. But I am only anxious to be the inſtrument. Let her be indebted to one of her own ſex, of unqueſtionable reputation. Admit her into this houſe—invite her to your arms—cheriſh and conſole her as your ſiſter."

"Before I am convinced that ſhe deſerves it? And even then, what regard ſhall I, young, unmarried, independent, affluently pay to my own reputation in harbouring ſuch woman in theſe circumſtances?"

"But you need not act yourſelf. Make me your agent and almoner. Only ſupply her with the means of ſubſiſtence through me."

"Would you have me act a clandeſtine part? Hold meetings with one of your ſex, and give him money for a purpoſe which I muſt hide from the world? Is it worth while to be a diſſembler and impoſtor? And will not ſuch conduct incur more dangerous ſurmiſes and ſuſpicions, than would ariſe from acting openly and directly? You will

will forgive me for reminding you likewiſe, that it is particularly incumbent upon thoſe in my ſituation to be circumſpect in their intercourſe with men and with ſtrangers. This is the ſecond time that I have ſeen you. My knowledge of you is extremely dubious and imperfect, and ſuch as would make the conduct you preſcribe to me, in a high degree raſh and culpable. You muſt not, therefore, expect me to purſue it."

Theſe words were delivered with an air of firmneſs and dignity. I was not inſenſible to the truth of her repreſentations.

"I confeſs," ſaid I, "what you have ſaid makes me doubt the propriety of my propoſal. Yet I would fain be of ſervice to her. Cannot you point out ſome practicable method?"

She was ſilent and thoughtful, and ſeemed indiſpoſed to anſwer my queſtion.

"I had ſet my heart upon ſucceſs in this negotiation," continued I, "and could not imagine any obſtacle to its ſucceſs; but I find my ignorance of the world's ways much

greater than I had previouſly expected. You defraud yourſelf of all the happineſs redounding from the act of making others happy; you ſacrifice ſubſtance to ſhew, and are more anxious to prevent unjuſt aſperſions from lighting on yourſelf, than to reſcue a fellow-creature from guilt and infamy. You are rich, and abound in all the conveniences and luxuries of life. A ſmalle portion of your ſuperfluity would obviate thèy wants of a being not leſs worthy than yourſe ſelf. It is not avarice, or averſion to labour, that makes you withhold your hand: it is dread of the ſneers and ſurmiſes of malevolence and ignorance. I will not urge you further at preſent. Your determination to be wiſe ſhould not be haſty. Think upon the ſubject calmly and ſedately, and form your reſolution in the courſe of three days. At the end of that period I will viſit you again."

So ſaying, and without waiting for comment or anſwer, I withdrew.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

FATAL INFORMATION.

I MOUNTED the ſtage-coach at day-break the next day, in company with a ſallow Frenchman from St. Domingo, his fiddle-caſe, an ape, and two female blacks. The Frenchman, after paſſing the ſuburbs, took out his violin, and amuſed himſelf with humming to his own *tweedle-tweedle*. The monkey now and then munched an apple, which was given to him from a baſket by the blacks, who gazed with ſtupid wonder, and an exclamatory *La! La!* upon the paſſing ſcenery, or chattered to each

other in a ſort of open-mouthed, half-articulate, monotonous, and ſing-ſong jargon.

The man looked ſeldom either on this ſide or that; and ſpoke only to rebuke the frolics of the monkey, with a *Tenez! Dominique! Prenez garde! Diable noir!*

As to me, my thought was buſy in a thouſand ways. I ſometimes gazed at the faces of my *four* companions, and endeavoured to diſcern the differences and ſameneſſes between them. I took an exact account of the features, proportions, looks, and geſtures of the monkey, the Congoleſe, and the Creole-Gaul. I compared them together, and examined them apart. I looked at them in a thouſand different points of view, and purſued, untired and unſatiated, thoſe ſtrains of reflections which began at each change of tone, feature, and attitude.

I marked the country as it ſucceſſively aroſe before me, and found endleſs employment in examining the ſhape and ſubſtance of the fence, the barn, and the cottage, the aſpect of earth and of heaven. How great

are

are the pleaſures of health and of mental activity?

My chief occupation, however, related to the ſcenes into which I was about to enter. My imaginations were, of courſe, crude and inadequate; and I found an uncommon gratification in comparing realities, as they ſucceſſively occurred, with the pictures which my wayward fancy had depicted.

I will not deſcribe my dreams. My proper taſk is to relate the truth. Neither ſhall I dwell upon the images ſuggeſted by the condition of the country through which I paſſed. I will confine myſelf to mentioning the tranſactions connected with the purpoſe of my journey.

I reached Baltimore at night. I was not ſo fatigued, but that I could ramble through the town. I intended, at preſent, merely the gratification of a ſtranger's curioſity. My viſit to Mrs. Watſon and her brother I deſigned ſhould take place on the morrow. The evening of my arrival I deemed an unſeaſonable time.

While roving about, however, it occurred to me that it might not be impolitic to find the way to their habitation even now. My purposes of general curiosity would equally be served, whichever way my steps were bent, and to trace the path to their dwelling, would save me the trouble of enquiries and interrogations to-morrow.

When I looked forward to an interview with the wife of Watson, and to the subject which would be necessarily discussed at that interview, I felt a trembling and misgiving at my heart.—"Surely," thought I, "it will become me to exercise immeasurable circumspection and address; and yet how little are these adapted to the impetuosity and candour of my nature! How am I to introduce myself? What am I to tell her?—That I was a sort of witness to the murder of her husband—that I received from the hand of his assassin the letter which I afterwards transmitted to her—and, from the same hands, the bills contained in his girdle? How will she start, and look aghast? What

suspicions

ſuſpicions will ſhe harbour? What enquiries ſhall be made of me? How ſhall they be diſarmed and eluded, or anſwered? Deep conſideration will be neceſſary before I truſt myſelf to ſuch an interview. The coming night ſhall be devoted to reflection upon this ſubject."

From theſe thoughts I proceeded to enquiries for the ſtreet mentioned in the advertiſement, where Mrs. Watſon was ſaid to reſide. The ſtreet and, at length, the habitation were found. Having reached a ſtation oppoſite, I pauſed, and ſurveyed the manſion. It was a wooden edifice of two ſtories—humble, but neat. The aſcent to the door was by ſeveral ſtone ſteps. Of the two lower windows, the ſhutters of one were cloſed, but thoſe of the other were open. Though late in the evening, there was no appearance of light or fire within.

Beſide the houſe was a painted fence, through which was a gate leading to the back of the building. Guided by the impulſe of the moment, I croſſed the ſtreet

to the gate, and lifting the latch, entered the paved alley, on one ſide of which was a paled fence, and on the other the houſe, looking through two windows into the alley.

The firſt window was dark, like thoſe in front, but at the ſecond a light was diſcernible. I approached it, and looking through, beheld a plain but neat apartment, in which parlour, kitchen, and nurſery ſeemed to be united. A fire burned cheerfully in the chimney, over which was a tea-kettle. On the hearth ſat a ſmiling and playful cherub of a boy, toſſing ſomething to a black girl who ſat oppoſite, and whoſe innocent and regular features wanted only a different hue to make them beautiful. Near it, in a rocking chair, with a ſleeping babe in her lap, ſat a female figure in plain, but neat and becoming attire. Her poſture permitted half her face to be ſeen, and ſaved me from any danger of being obſerved.

This countenance was full of ſweetneſs and benignity; but the ſadneſs that veiled its luſtre was profound. Her eyes were now

now fixed upon the fire, and were moiſt with the tears of remembrance, while ſhe ſung, in low and ſcarcely audible ſtrains, an artleſs lullaby.

This ſpectacle exerciſed a ſtrange power over my feelings. While occupied in meditating on the features of the mother, I was unaware of my conſpicuous ſituation. The black girl having occaſion to change her ſituation, in order to reach the ball which was thrown at her, unluckily caught a glance of my figure through the glaſs. In a tone of half ſurpriſe and half terror, ſhe cried out—"Oh! ſee dare! a man!"

I was tempted to draw ſuddenly back, but a ſecond thought ſhewed me the impropriety of departing thus abruptly, and leaving behind me ſome alarm. I felt a ſort of neceſſity for apologizing for my intruſion into theſe precincts, and haſtened to a door that led into the ſame apartment. I knocked. A voice ſomewhat confuſed bade me enter. It was not till I opened the door, and entered the room, that I fully ſaw

in what embarraſſments I had incautiouſly involved myſelf.

I could ſcarcely obtain ſufficient courage to ſpeak, and give a confuſed aſſent to the queſtion—" Have you buſineſs with me, Sir?"

She offered me a chair, and I ſat down. She put the child, not yet awakened, into the arms of the black, who kiſſed it, and rocked it in her arms with great ſatisfaction; and reſuming her ſeat, looked at me with inquiſitiveneſs mingled with complacency.

After a moment's pauſe, I ſaid—" I was directed to this houſe as the abode of Mr. Ephraim Williams. Can he be ſeen, Madam?"

" He is not in town at preſent. If you will leave a meſſage with me, I will punctually deliver it."

The thought ſuddenly occurred whether any more was needful than merely to leave the bills ſuitably encloſed, as they already were, in a packet. Thus all painful explanations might be avoided, and I might have

have reaſon to congratulate myſelf on his ſeaſonable abſence. Actuated by theſe thoughts, I drew forth the packet, and put it into her hand, ſaying—"I will leave this in your poſſeſſion, and muſt earneſtly requeſt you to keep it ſafe until you can deliver it into his own hands."

Scarcely had I ſaid this before new ſuggeſtions occurred. Was it right to act in this clandeſtine and myſterious manner? Should I leave theſe perſons in uncertainty reſpecting the fate of a huſband and a brother? What perplexities, miſunderſtandings, and ſuſpenſes might not grow out of this uncertainty?—and ought they not to be precluded, at any hazard to my own ſafety or good name?

Theſe ſentiments made me involuntarily ſtretch forth my hand to retake the packet. This geſture, and other ſignificances in my manners, joined to a trembling conſciouſneſs in herſelf, filled my companion with all the tokens of confuſion and fear. She alternately looked at me and at the paper.

Her trepidation increaſed, and ſhe grew pale. Theſe emotions were counteracted by a ſtrong effort.

At length ſhe ſaid, falteringly—"I will take good care of them, and will give them to my brother."

She roſe, and placed them in a drawer, after which ſhe reſumed her ſeat.

On this occaſion all my warineſs forſook me. I cannot explain why my perplexity and the trouble of my thoughts were greater upon this than upon ſimilar occaſions. However it be, I was incapable of ſpeaking, and fixed my eyes upon the floor. A ſort of electrical ſympathy pervaded my companion, and terror and anguiſh were ſtrongly manifeſted in the glances which ſhe ſometimes ſtole at me. We ſeemed fully to underſtand each other without the aid of words.

This imbecility could not laſt long. I gradually recovered my compoſure, and collected my ſcattered thoughts. I looked

at

at her with ſeriouſneſs, and ſtedfaſtly ſpoke—"Are you the wife of Amos Watſon?"

She ſtarted.—"I am indeed. Why do you aſk? Do you know any thing of——"

There her voice failed.

I replied with quickneſs—"Yes. I am fully acquainted with his deſtiny."

"Good God!" ſhe exclaimed, in a paroxyſm of ſurpriſe, and bending eagerly forward, "my huſband is then alive? This packet is from him. Where is he? When did you ſee him?"

"'Tis a long time ſince."

"But where, where is he now? Is he well? Will he return to me?"

"Never."

"Merciful Heaven!" looking upwards, and claſping her hands, "I thank thee at leaſt for his life! But why has he forſaken me? Why will he not return?"

"For a good reaſon," ſaid I, with augmented ſolemnity, "he will never return to thee: long ago was he laid in the cold grave."

She

She ſhrieked; and at the next moment ſunk in a ſwoon upon the floor. I was alarmed. The two children ſhrieked, and ran about the room terrified, and unknowing what they did. I was overwhelmed with ſomewhat like terror, yet I involuntarily raiſed the mother in my arms, and was endeavouring to deviſe means of recovering her from this fit.

Time to effect this had not elapſed, when ſeveral perſons, apparently Mrs. Watſon's neighbours, and raiſed by the outcries of the girls, haſtily entered the room. They looked at me with mingled ſurpriſe and ſuſpicion; but my attitude, being not that of an injurer, but helper—my countenance, which ſhewed the pleaſure their entrance, at this critical moment, afforded me—and my words, in which I beſought their aſſiſtance, and explained, in ſome degree, and briefly, the cauſe of thoſe appearances, removed their ill thoughts.

Preſently

Preſently the unhappy woman, being carried by the new-comers into a bed-room adjoining, recovered her ſenſibility. I only waited for this. I had done my part. More information would be uſeleſs to her, and not be given by me, at leaſt in the preſent audience, without embarraſſment and peril. I ſuddenly determined to withdraw; and this, the attention of the company being otherwiſe engaged, I did without notice.

I returned to my inn, and ſhut myſelf up in my chamber. Such was the change which, undeſigned, unforeſeen, half an hour had wrought in my ſituation. My cautious projects had periſhed in their conception: that which I had deemed ſo arduous, to require ſuch circumſpect approaches, ſuch well-concerted ſpeeches, was done.

I had ſtarted up before this woman, as if from the pores of the ground. I had vaniſhed with the ſame celerity, but had left

left her in poſſeſſion of proofs ſufficient that I was neither ſpectre nor demon.—" I will viſit her," ſaid I, " again. I will ſee her brother, and know the full effect of my diſcloſure. I will tell them all that I myſelf know. Ignorance would be no leſs injurious to them than to myſelf; but firſt I will ſee the Maurices."

CHAP. IX.

AN UNEXPECTED RECEPTION.

NEXT morning I arose betimes, and equipped myself without delay. I had eight or ten miles to walk, so far from the town being the residence of these people; and I forthwith repaired to their dwelling. The persons whom I desired to see, were known to me only by name, and by their place of abode. It was a mother and her three daughters to whom I now carried the means, not only of competence, but riches; means which they, no doubt, had long ago despaired of regaining, and which, among all possible messengers,

meſſengers, one of my age and guiſe would be the leaſt ſuſpected of being able to reſtore.

I arrived, through intricate ways, at eleven o'clock, at the houſe of Mrs. Maurice. It was a neat dwelling, in a very fanciful and ruſtic ſtyle, in the boſom of a valley, which, when decorated by the verdure and bloſſoms of the coming ſeaſon, muſt poſſeſs many charms. At preſent it was naked and dreary.

As I approached it through a long avenue, I obſerved two female figures, walking arm in arm, and ſlowly to and fro, in the path in which I now was.

"Theſe," ſaid I, "are daughters of the family. Graceful, well-dreſſed, faſhionable girls they ſeem at this diſtance. May they be deſerving of the good tidings which I bring!"

Seeing them turn towards the houſe, I mended my pace, that I might overtake them, and requeſt their introduction of me to their mother.

As I more nearly approached, they again turned; and perceiving me, they ſtood as if in

in expectation of my meſſage. I went up to them.

A ſingle glance caſt at each made me ſuſpect that they were not ſiſters; but, ſomewhat to my diſappointment, there was nothing highly prepoſſeſſing in the countenance of either. They were what are every day met with, though leſs embelliſhed by brilliant drapery and turban, in markets and ſtreets; an air ſomewhat haughty, ſomewhat ſupercilious, leſſened ſtill more their attractions. Theſe defects, however, were nothing to me.

I enquired of her that ſeemed to be the elder of the two, for Mrs. Maurice.

"She is indiſpoſed," was the cold reply.

"That is unfortunate. Is it not poſſible to ſee her?"

"No," with ſtill more gravity.

I was ſomewhat at a loſs how to proceed. A pauſe enſued. At length the ſame lady reſumed—

"What's your buſineſs? You can leave your meſſage with me."

"With

"With nobody but her. If ſhe be not *very* much indiſpoſed——"

"She is very much indiſpoſed," interrupted ſhe peeviſhly. "If you cannot leave your meſſage, you may take it back again, for ſhe muſt not be diſturbed."

This was a ſingular reception. I was diſconcerted and ſilent; I knew not what to ſay.—"Perhaps," I at laſt obſerved, "ſome other time——"

"No," with increaſing heat, "no other time. She is more likely to be worſe than better. Come, Betſy," ſaid ſhe, taking hold of her companion's arm; and entering the houſe, ſhut the door after her, and diſappeared.

I ſtood at the bottom of the ſteps, confounded at ſuch ſtrange and unexpected treatment. I could not withdraw till my purpoſe was accompliſhed. After a moment's pauſe, I ſtepped to the door, and pulled the bell. A Negro came, of a very unpropitious aſpect, and opening the door, looked at me in ſilence. To my queſtion,

was

was Mrs. Maurice to be ſeen, he made ſome anſwer in a jargon which I could not underſtand; but his words were immediately followed by an unſeen perſon within the houſe —" Mrs. Maurice can't be ſeen by any body. Come in, Cato, and ſhut the door."

This injunction was obeyed by Cato without ceremony.

Here was a dilemma! I came with ten thouſand pounds in my hands to beſtow freely on theſe people, and ſuch was the treatment I received.

" I muſt adopt," ſaid I, " a new mode."

I lifted the latch without a ſecond warning, and, Cato having diſappeared, went into a room, the door of which chanced to be open, on my right hand. I found within the two females whom I had accoſted in the portico. I now addreſſed myſelf to the younger.

" This intruſion, when I have explained the reaſon of it, will, I hope, be forgiven. I come, Madam——"

" Yes," interrupted the other, with a countenance

countenance ſuffuſed by indignation, "I know very well whom you come from, and what it is that prompts this inſolence; but your employer ſhall ſee that we have not ſunk ſo low as he imagines. Cato! Bob! I ſay!"

"My employer, Madam!—I ſee you labour under ſome great miſtake. I have no employer. I come from a great diſtance. I come to bring intelligence of the utmoſt importance to your family. I come to benefit, and not to injure you."

By this time Bob and Cato, two ſturdy blacks, entered the room.

"Turn this perſon," ſaid the imperious lady, regardleſs of my explanations, "out of the houſe. Don't you hear me?" ſhe continued, obſerving that they looked at each other, and heſitated.

"Surely, Madam," ſaid I, "you are precipitate. You are t eating like an enemy one who will prove himſelf your mother's beſt friend."

"Will

"Will you leave the houſe?" ſhe exclaimed, quite beſide herſelf with anger. "Villains! why don't you do as I bid you?"

The blacks looked at each other, as if waiting for an example: their habitual deference for every thing *white*, no doubt, held their hands from what they regarded as a profanation. At laſt Bob ſaid in a whining beſeeching tone—"Why, Miſſee, Maſſa buckra wanna go for doo, dan he wanna go fo' wee."

The lady now burſt into tears of rage. She held out her hand menacingly.

"Will you leave the houſe?"

"Not willingly," ſaid I, in a mild tone. "I came too far to return with the buſineſs that brought me unperformed. I am perſuaded, Madam, you miſtake my character and my views. I have a meſſage to deliver your mother, which deeply concerns her and your happineſs, if you are her daughter. I merely wiſhed to ſee her, and leave with her a piece of important news—news in which her fortune is deeply intereſted."

Theſe

Theſe words had a wonderful effect upon the young lady; her anger was checked.

"Good God!" ſhe exclaimed, "are you Watſon?"

"No; I am only Watſon's repreſentative, and come to do all that Watſon could do if he were preſent."

She was now importunate to know my buſineſs.

"My buſineſs lies with Mrs. Maurice. Advertiſements which I have ſeen, direct me to her, and to this houſe; and to her only ſhall I deliver my meſſage."

"Perhaps," ſaid ſhe, with a face of apology, "I have miſtaken you. Mrs. Maurice is my mother. She is really indiſpoſed; but I can ſtand in her place on this occaſion."

"You cannot repreſent her in this inſtance. If I cannot have acceſs to her now, I muſt go, and ſhall return when you are willing to grant it."

"Nay," replied ſhe, "ſhe is not, perhaps, ſo very ſick but that——I will go, and ſee if ſhe will admit you."

So saying, she left me for three minutes; and returning, said her mother wished to see me.

I followed up stairs, at her request; and entering an ill-furnished chamber, found, seated in an arm-chair, a lady seemingly in years, pale, and visibly infirm. The lines of her countenance were far from laying claim to my reverence; it was too much like the daughter's.

She looked at me, at my entrance, with great eagerness, and said in a sharp tone—"Pray, friend, what is it you want with me? Make haste—tell your story, and begone!"

"My story is a short one, and easily told. Amos Watson was your agent in Jamaica. He sold an estate belonging to you, and received the money."

"He did," said she, attempting ineffectually to rise from her seat, and her eyes beaming with a significance that shocked me; —"he did, the villain! and purloined the money, to the ruin of me and my daughters. But if there be justice on earth, it will over-

take him. I truſt I ſhall have the pleaſure one day—I hope to hear he's hanged! Well, but go on, friend. He *did* ſell it, I tell you!"

"He ſold it for ten thouſand pounds," I reſumed, "and inveſted this ſum in bills of exchange. Watſon is dead. Theſe bills came into my hands. I was lately informed by the public papers who were the real owners, and have come from Philadelphia with no other view than to reſtore them to you. There they are," continued I, placing them in her lap, "entire and untouched."

She ſeized the papers, and looked at me and at her daughter, by turns, with an air of one ſuddenly bewildered. She ſeemed ſpeechleſs, and growing ſuddenly more ghaſtly pale, leaned her head back upon the chair. The daughter ſcreamed, and haſtened to ſupport the languid parent, who difficultly articulated—"Oh, I am ſick—ſick to death! Put me on the bed!"

I was aſtoniſhed and affrighted at this ſcene. Some of the domeſtics, of both colours,

colours, entered, and gazed at me with ſurpriſe. Involuntarily I withdrew, and returned to the room below, into which I had firſt entered, and which I now found deſerted.

I was for ſome time at a loſs to gueſs at the cauſe of theſe appearances. At length it occurred to me that joy was the ſource of the ſickneſs that had ſeized Mrs. Maurice. The abrupt recovery of what had probably been deemed irretrievable, would naturally produce this effect upon a mind of a certain texture.

I was deliberating whether to ſtay or go, when the daughter entered the room, and, after expreſſing ſome ſurpriſe at ſeeing me, whom ſhe ſuppoſed to have retired, told me that her mother wiſhed to ſee me again before my departure. In this requeſt there was no kindneſs; all was cold, ſupercilious, and ſullen. I obeyed the ſummons without ſpeaking.

I found Mrs. Maurice ſeated in her arm-chair, much in her former guiſe. Without deſiring me to be ſeated, or relaxing aught

in her aſperity of looks and tones—" Pray, friend, how did you *come by* theſe papers?"

" I aſſure you, Madam, they were honeſtly *come by*," anſwered I ſedately, and with half a ſmile; " but, if the whole be there that was miſſing, the mode and time in which they came to me is matter of concern only to myſelf. Is there any deficiency?"

" I'm not ſure. I don't know much of theſe matters. There may be leſs. I dare ſay there is. I ſhall know that ſoon. I expect a friend of mine every minute, who will look them over. I don't doubt you can give a good account of yourſelf."

" I doubt not but I can—to thoſe who have a right to demand it. In this caſe curioſity muſt be very urgent indeed before I ſhall conſent to gratify it."

" You muſt know this is a ſuſpicious caſe. Watſon, to be ſure, embezzled the money —to be ſure, you are his accomplice."

" Certainly," ſaid I, " my conduct on this occaſion proves that. What I have brought to you of my own accord—what I have

have reſtored to you fully and unconditionally, it is plain Watſon embezzled, and that I was aiding in the fraud. To reſtore what was never ſtolen, always betrays the thief; to give what might be kept without ſuſpicion, is, without doubt, arrant knavery!—To be ſerious, Madam, in coming thus far for this purpoſe I have done enough, and muſt now bid you farewell.

"Nay, don't go yet: I have ſomething more to ſay to you. My friend, I'm ſure, will be here preſently, There he is," noticing a peal upon the bell. "Polly, go down, and ſee if that's Mr. Somers. If it is, bring him up."

The daughter went.

I walked to the window, abſorbed in my own reflections. I was diſappointed and dejected. The ſcene before me was the unpleaſing reverſe of all that my fancy, while coming hither, had foreboded. I expected to find virtuous indigence and ſorrow lifted by my means to affluence and exultation: I expected to witneſs the tears of gratitude

and the careſſes of affection. What had I found? Nothing but ſordidneſs, ſtupidity, and illiberal ſuſpicion.

The daughter ſtaid much longer than the mother's patience could endure. She knocked againſt the floor with her heel. A ſervant came up.—"Where's Polly, you ſlut? It was not you, huſſey, that I wanted—it was ſhe!"

"She is talking in the parlour with a gentleman."

"Mr. Somers, I ſuppoſe. Hey, fool! Run with my compliments to him, wench! Tell him I ſhould be glad if he would walk up."

"It is not Mr. Somers, Ma'am."

"No! Who then, ſaucebox? What gentleman can have any thing to do with Polly?"

"I don't know, Ma'am."

"Who ſaid you did, impertinence? Run and tell her I want her this inſtant."

The ſummons was not delivered, or Polly did not think proper to obey it. Full ten minutes of thoughtful ſilence on my part, and

and of muttered vexation and impatience on that of the old lady, elapſed before Polly's entrance. As ſoon as ſhe appeared, the mother began to complain bitterly of her inattention and neglect; but Polly, taking no notice of her, addreſſed herſelf to me, and told me that a gentleman below wiſhed to ſee me. I haſtened down, and found a ſtranger of plain appearance in the parlour. His aſpect was liberal and ingenuous; and I quickly collected from his diſcourſe, that this was the brother-in-law of Watſon, and the companion of his laſt voyage.

CHAP. X.

PLEASING INTELLIGENCE.

MY eyes ſparkled with pleaſure at this unexpected interview, and I willingly confeſſed my deſire to communicate all the knowledge of his brother's deſtiny which I poſſeſſed. He told me that, returning late to Baltimore on the laſt evening, he found his ſiſter in much agitation and diſtreſs, which, after a time, ſhe explained to him. She likewiſe put the packets I had left into his hands.

"I leave you to imagine," continued he, "my ſurpriſe and curioſity at this diſcovery;

very. I was, of courſe, impatient to ſee the bearer of ſuch extraordinary tidings. This morning enquiring for one of your appearance at the taverns, I was at length informed of your arrival yeſterday in the ſtage, of your going out alone in the evening, of your ſubſequent return, and of your early departure this morning. Accidentally I lighted on your footſteps; and, by ſuitable enquiries on the road, have finally traced you hither. You told my ſiſter her huſband was dead. You left with her papers that were probably in his poſſeſſion at the time of his death. I underſtand from Miſs Maurice that the bills belonging to her mother, have juſt been delivered to her. I preſume you have no objection to clear up this myſtery."

"To you I am anxious to unfold every thing. At this moment, or at any time; but the ſooner, the more agreeable to me."

"This," ſaid he, looking round him, "is not a proper place: there is an inn not

a hundred yards from this gate, where I have left my horſe. Will you go thither?"

I readily conſented; and calling for a private apartment, I laid before him every incident of my life connected with Welbeck and Watſon. My full, circumſtantial, and explicit ſtory appeared to remove every doubt which he might have entertained of my integrity.

In Williams I found a plain, good man, of a temper confiding and affectionate. My narration being finiſhed, he expreſſed, by unaffected tokens, his wonder and his grief on account of Watſon's deſtiny. To my enquiries, which were made with frankneſs and fervour, reſpecting his own and his ſiſter's condition, he ſaid that the ſituation of both was deplorable till the recovery of this property. They had been ſaved from utter ruin, from beggary, and a jail, only by the generoſity and lenity of his creditors, who did not ſuffer the ſuſpicious circumſtances attending Watſon's diſappearance to outweigh former proofs of his probity: they

they had never relinquiſhed the hopes of receiving ſome tidings of their kinſman.

I related what had juſt paſſed in the houſe of Mrs. Maurice, and requeſted to know from him the hiſtory and character of this family.

"They have treated you," he anſwered, "exactly as any one who knew them would have predicted. The mother is narrow, ignorant, bigotted, and avaricious. The eldeſt daughter, whom you ſaw, reſembles the old lady in many things. Age, indeed, may render the ſimilitude complete. At preſent, pride and ill-humour are her chief characteriſtics. The youngeſt daughter has nothing in mind or perſon in common with her family. Where they are iraſcible, ſhe is patient; where they are imperious, ſhe is humble; where they are covetous, ſhe is liberal; where they are ignorant and indolent, ſhe is ſtudious and ſkilful. It is rare, indeed, to find a young lady more amiable than Miſs Fanny Maurice, or who has had more croſſes and afflictions to ſuſtain. The eldeſt

daughter always extorted the ſupply of her wants from her parents by threats and importunities; but the younger could never be prevailed upon to employ the ſame means, and hence ſhe ſuffered inconveniences which, to any other girl born to an equal rank, would have been to the laſt degree humiliating and vexatious. To her they only afforded new opportunities for the diſplay of her moſt ſhining virtues—fortitude and charity. No inſtance of their ſordidneſs or tyranny ever ſtole a murmur from her. For what they had given, exiſtence and a virtuous education, ſhe ſaid they were entitled to gratitude. What they withheld was their own, in the uſe of which they were not accountable to her. She was not aſhamed to owe her ſubſiſtence to her own induſtry, and was only held by the pride of her family, (in this inſtance their pride was equal to their avarice), from ſeeking out ſome lucrative kind of employment. Since the ſhock which their fortune ſuſtained by Watſon's diſappearance, ſhe has been permitted

mitted to purſue this plan, and ſhe now teaches muſic in Baltimore for a living. No one, however, in the higheſt rank, can be more generally reſpected and careſſed than ſhe is."

"But will not the recovery of this money make a favourable change in her condition?"

"I can hardly tell; but I am inclined to think it will not. It will not change her mother's character. Her pride may be awakened anew, and ſhe may oblige Miſs Fanny to relinquiſh her new profeſſion, and that will be a change to be deplored."

"What good has been done, then, by reſtoring this money?"

"If pleaſure be good, you muſt have conferred a great deal on the Maurices—upon the mother and two of the daughters, at leaſt—the only pleaſure, indeed, which their natures can receive. It is leſs than if you had raiſed them from abſolute indigence, which has not been the caſe, ſince they had wherewithal to live upon beſides

their Jamaica property.—But how," continued Williams, ſuddenly recollecting himſelf, "have you claimed the reward promiſed to him who ſhould reſtore theſe bills?"

"What reward?"

"No leſs than a thouſand dollars. It was publicly promiſed under the hands of Mrs. Maurice and of Hemmings, her huſband's executor."

"Really!" ſaid I, "that circumſtance eſcaped my attention; and I wonder that it did: but it is too late to repair the evil."

"Then you have no ſcruple to accept the reward?"

"Certainly not. Could you ſuſpect me of ſo ſtrange a punctilio as that?"

"Yes; but I know not why. The ſtory you have juſt finiſhed taught me to expect ſome unreaſonable refinement upon that head. To be hired, to be bribed to do our duty is ſuppoſed by ſome to be degrading."

"This is no ſuch bribe to me. I ſhould have

have acted juſt as I have done, had no recompence been promiſed. In truth this has been my conduct, for I never once thought of the reward; but now that you remind me of it, I would gladly ſee it beſtowed. To fulfil their engagements in this reſpect, is no more than juſtice in the Maurices. To one in my condition the money will be highly uſeful. If theſe people were poor, or generous and worthy, or if I myſelf were already rich, I might leſs repine at their withholding it; but things being as they are with them and with me, it would, I think, be groſs injuſtice in them to withhold, and in me to refuſe."

"That injuſtice," ſaid Williams, "will on their part, I fear, be committed. 'Tis a pity you firſt applied to Mrs. Maurice. Nothing can be expected from her avarice, unleſs it be wreſted from her by a lawſuit."

"That is a force which I ſhall never apply."

"Had you gone firſt to Hemmings, you might,

might, I think, have looked for payment. He is not a mean man. A thouſand dollars, he muſt know, is not much to give for forty thouſand. Perhaps, indeed, it may not yet be too late. I am well known to him, and, if you pleaſe, will attend you to him in the evening, and ſtate your claim."

I thankfully accepted this offer, and went with him accordingly. I found that Hemmings had been with Mrs. Maurice in the courſe of the day, had received from her intelligence of this tranſaction, and had entertained the expectation of a viſit from me for this very purpoſe.

While Williams explained to him the nature of my claim, he ſcanned me with great intentneſs. His auſtere and inflexible brow afforded me little room to hope for ſucceſs; and this hopeleſſneſs was confirmed by his ſilence and perplexity when Williams had made an end.

"To be ſure," ſaid he, after ſome pauſe, "the contract was explicit. To be ſure the conditions on Mr. Mervyn's ſide have

have been performed. Certain it is the bills are entire and complete; but Mrs. Maurice will not conſent to do her part: and Mrs. Maurice, to whom the papers were preſented, is the perſon by whom, according to the terms of the contract, the reward muſt be paid."

"But Mrs. Maurice, you know, Sir, may be legally compelled to pay," ſaid Williams.

"Perhaps ſhe may; but I tell you plainly, that ſhe never will do the thing without compulſion. Legal proceſs, however, in this caſe will have other inconveniences beſides delay. Some curioſity will naturally be excited as to the hiſtory of theſe papers. Watſon diſappeared a twelvemonth ago. Who can avoid aſking where have theſe papers been depoſited all this while, and how came this perſon in poſſeſſion of them?"

"That kind of curioſity," ſaid I, "is natural and laudable, and gladly would I gratify it. Diſcloſure or concealment in that

that caſe, however, would nowiſe affect my preſent claim. Whether a bond, legally executed, ſhall be paid, does not depend upon determining whether the payer is fondeſt of boiled mutton or roaſt beef. Truth, in the firſt caſe, has no connection with truth in the ſecond. So far from eluding this curioſity—ſo far from ſtudying concealment, I am anxious to publiſh the truth."

"You are right to be ſure," ſaid Hemmings. "Curioſity is a natural, but only an incidental conſequence in this caſe. I have no reaſon for deſiring that it ſhould be an unpleaſant conſequence to you."

"Well, Sir," ſaid Williams, "you think that Arthur Mervyn has no remedy in this caſe but the law?"

"Mrs. Maurice, to be ſure, will never pay but on compulſion. Mervyn ſhould have known his own intereſt better. While his left hand was ſtretched out to give, his right ſhould have been held forth to receive. As it is, he muſt be contented with the aid of law.

law. Any attorney will profecute on condition of receiving *half the ſum* when recovered."

We now roſe to take our leave, when Hemmings, deſiring us to pauſe a moment, ſaid—" To be ſure, in the utmoſt ſtrictneſs of the terms of our promiſe, the reward was to be paid by the perſon who received the papers; but it muſt be owned that your claim at any rate is equitable. I have money of the deceaſed Mr. Maurice in my hands. Theſe very bills are now in my poſſeſſion. I will therefore pay your due, and take the conſequences of an act of juſtice on myſelf. I was prepared for you. Sign that receipt, and there is a check for the amount.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

A PATERNAL VISIT.

THIS unexpected and agreeable decision was accompanied by an invitation to supper, at which we were treated by our host with much affability and kindness. Finding me the author of Williams's good fortune as well as Mrs. Maurice's, and being assured by the former of his entire conviction of the rectitude of my conduct, he laid aside all reserve and distance with regard to me. He enquired into my prospects and wishes, and professed his willingness to serve me.

I dealt with equal unreserve and frankness.

"I am

"I am poor," ſaid I. "Money for my very expences hither I have borrowed from a friend, to whom I am in other reſpects much indebted, and whom I expect to compenſate only by gratitude and future ſervices.

"In coming hither, I expected only an increaſe of my debts—to ſink ſtill deeper into poverty; but happily the iſſue has made me rich. This hour has given me competence at leaſt."

"What! call you a thouſand dollars competence?"

"More than competence; I call it an abundance. My own ingenuity, while I enjoy health, will enable me to live. This I regard as a fund, firſt to pay my debts, and next to ſupply deficiencies occaſioned by untoward accidents or ill health during the enſuing three or four years at leaſt."

We parted with this new acquaintance at a late hour, and I accepted Williams's invitation to paſs the time I ſhould ſpend at Baltimore, under his ſiſter's roof. There were

were ſeveral motives for prolonging this ſtay. What I had heard of Miſs Fanny Maurice excited ſtrong wiſhes to be perſonally acquainted with her. This young lady was affectionately attached to Mrs. Watſon, by whoſe means my wiſhes were eaſily accompliſhed.

I never was in habits of reſerve even with thoſe whom I had no reaſon to eſteem; with thoſe who claimed my admiration and affection, it was impoſſible not to be communicative. Before the end of my ſecond interview, both theſe women were miſtreſſes of every momentous incident of my life, and of the whole chain of my feelings and opinions in relation to every ſubject, and particularly in relation to themſelves. Every topic diſconnected with theſe, is comparatively lifeleſs and inert.

I found it eaſy to win their attention, and to render them communicative in their turn. As full diſcloſures as I had made without condition or requeſt, my enquiries and example eaſily obtained from Mrs. Watſon and

and Miſs Maurice. The former related every event of her youth, and the circumſtances leading to her marriage: ſhe depicted the character of her huſband, and the whole train of ſuſpenſes and inquietudes occaſioned by his diſappearance. The latter did not hide from me her opinions upon any important ſubject, and made me thoroughly acquainted with her actual ſituation.

This intercourſe was ſtrangely faſcinating; my heart was buoyed up by a kind of intoxication. I now found myſelf exalted to my genial element, and began to taſte the delights of exiſtence. In the intercourſe of ingenuous and ſympathetic minds, I found a pleaſure which I had not previouſly conceived.

The time flew ſwiftly away, and a fortnight paſſed almoſt before I was aware that a day had gone by. I did not forget the friends whom I had left behind, but maintained a punctual correſpondence with Stevens, to whom I imparted all occurrences.

The

The recovery of my friend's kinſman allowed him in a few days to return home. His firſt object was the conſolation and relief of Carlton, whom, with much difficulty, he perſuaded to take advantage of the laws in favour of inſolvent debtors. Carlton's only debt was owing to his uncle; and by rendering up every ſpecies of property, except his clothes and the implements of his trade, he obtained a full diſcharge. In conjunction with his ſiſter, he once more aſſumed the pen; and being no longer burdened with debts he was unable to diſcharge, he reſumed, together with his pen, his cheerfulneſs. Their mutual induſtry was ſufficient for their decent and moderate ſubſiſtence.

The chief reaſon for my haſty return, was my anxiety reſpecting Clemenza Lodi. This reaſon was removed by the activity and benevolence of my friend. He paid this unfortunate ſtranger a viſit at Mrs. Villars's. Acceſs was eaſily obtained, and he found her ſunk into the deepeſt melancholy. The recent

recent loſs of her child, the death of Welbeck, of which ſhe was ſoon apprized, her total dependance upon thoſe with whom ſhe was placed, who, however, had always treated her without barbarity or indecorum, were the calamities that weighed down her ſpirit.

My friend eaſily engaged her confidence and gratitude, and prevailed upon her to take refuge under his own roof. Mrs. Wentworth's ſcruples, as well as thoſe of Miſs Fielding, were removed by his arguments and entreaties; and they conſented to take upon themſelves, and divide between them, the care of her ſubſiſtence and happineſs. They condeſcended to expreſs much curioſity reſpecting me, and ſome intereſt in my welfare, and promiſed to receive me on my return, on the footing of a friend.

With ſome reluctance, I at length bade my new friends farewell, and returned to Philadelphia. Nothing remained, before I ſhould enter on my projected ſcheme of ſtudy and employment, under the guidance of Stevens, but to examine the ſituation of

Eliza Hadwin with my own eyes, and, if poſſible, to extricate my father from his unfortunate ſituation.

My father's ſtate had given me the deepeſt concern. I figured to myſelf his condition, beſotted by brutal appetites, reduced to beggary, ſhut up in a noiſome priſon, and condemned to that ſociety which muſt foſter all his depraved propenſities. I revolved various ſchemes for his relief. A few hundreds would take him from priſon; but how ſhould he be afterwards diſpoſed of? How ſhould he be cured of his indolent habits? How ſhould he be ſcreened from the contagion of vicious ſociety? By what means, conſiſtently with my own wants, and the claims of others, ſhould I ſecure to him an acceptable ſubſiſtence?

Exhortation and example were vain; nothing but reſtraint would keep him at a diſtance from the haunts of brawling and debauchery. The want of money would be no obſtacle to prodigality and waſte; credit would be reſorted to as long as it would

anſwer his demand. When that failed, he would once more be thrown into priſon—the ſame means to extricate him would be to be repeated, and money be thus put into the pockets of the moſt worthleſs of mankind, the agents of drunkenneſs and blaſphemy, without any permanent advantage to my father, the principal object of my charity.

Though unable to fix on any plauſible mode of proceeding, I determined at leaſt to diſcover his preſent condition. Perhaps ſomething might ſuggeſt itſelf upon the ſpot, ſuited to my purpoſe. Without delay I proceeded to the village of Newtown, and alighting at the door of the priſon, enquired for my father.

"Sawny Mervyn you want, I ſuppoſe," ſaid the keeper. "Poor fellow! he came into limbo in a crazy condition, and has been a burthen on my hands ever ſince. After lingering for ſome time, he was at laſt kind enough to give us the ſlip. It is juſt

a week ſince he drank his laſt pint—and *died!*"

I was greatly ſhocked at this intelligence. It was ſome time before my reaſon came to my aid, and ſhewed me that this was an event, on the whole, and on a diſintereſted and diſpaſſionate view, not unfortunate. The keeper knew not my relation to the deceaſed, and readily recounted the behaviour of the priſoner, and the circumſtances of his laſt hours.

I ſhall not repeat the narrative; it is uſeleſs to keep alive the ſad remembrance. He was now beyond the reach of my charity or pity; and ſince reflection could anſwer no beneficial end to him, it was my duty to divert my thoughts into different channels, and live henceforth for my own happineſs, and that of thoſe who were within the ſphere of my influence.

I was now alone in the world, ſo far as the total want of kindred creates ſolitude. Not one of my blood, nor even of my name, were to

to be found in this quarter of the world. Of my mother's kindred I knew nothing; ſo far as friendſhip or ſervice might be claimed from them, to me they had no exiſtence. I was deſtitute of all thoſe benefits which flow from kindred, in relation to protection, advice, or property. My inheritance was nothing; not a ſingle relique or trinket in my poſſeſſion conſtituted a memorial of my family. The ſcenes of my childiſh and juvenile days were dreary and deſolate; the fields which I was wont to traverſe, the room in which I was born, retained no traces of the paſt: they were the property and reſidence of ſtrangers, who knew nothing of the former tenants, and who, as I was now told, had haſtened to new-model and transform every thing within and without the habitation.

Theſe images filled me with melancholy, which, however, diſappeared in proportion as I approached the abode of my beloved girl. Abſence had endeared the image of my Eliza to my ſoul. I could not think of her

without a melting ſoftneſs at my heart, and tears in which pain and pleaſure were unaccountably mingled. As I approached Curling's houſe, I ſtrained my ſight, in hopes of diſtinguiſhing her form through the evening duſk.

I had told her of my purpoſe by letter. She expected my approach at this hour, and was ſtationed, with a heart throbbing with impatience, at the road ſide, near the gate. As ſoon as I alighted, ſhe ruſhed into my arms.

I found my ſweet girl leſs blitheſome and contented than I wiſhed. Her ſituation, in ſpite of the parental and ſiſterly regards which ſhe received from the Curlings, was mournful and dreary to her imagination. Rural buſineſs was irkſome, and inſufficient to fill up her time. Her life was tireſome, and uniform, and heavy.

I ventured to blame her diſcontent, and pointed out the advantages of her ſituation.

"Whence," ſaid I, "can theſe diſſatisfactions and repinings ariſe?"

"I cannot

"I cannot tell," ſaid ſhe; "I don't know how it is with me. I am always ſorrowful and thoughtful. Perhaps I think too much of my poor father and of Suſan; and yet that can't be it neither, for I think of them but ſeldom—not half ſo much as I ought, perhaps. I think of nobody almoſt but you. Inſtead of minding my buſineſs, or chatting and laughing with Peggy Curling, I love to get by myſelf—to read over and over your letters, or to think how you are employed juſt then, and how happy I ſhould be if I were in Fanny Maurice's place.

"But it is all over now; this viſit rewards me for every thing. I wonder how I could ever be ſullen or mopeful. I will behave better, indeed I will; and be always, as now, a moſt happy girl."

The greater part of three days was ſpent in the ſociety of my friend, in liſtening to her relation of all that had happened during my abſence, and in communicating, in my turn, every incident which had befallen myſelf. After this I once more returned to the city.

CHAP. XII.

SENSIBILITY.

I NOW ſet about carrying my plan of life into effect. I began with ardent zeal and unwearied diligence the career of medical ſtudy. I beſpoke the counſels and inſtructions of my friend, attended him on his profeſſional viſits, and acted, in all practicable caſes, as his ſubſtitute. I found this application of time more pleaſurable than I had imagined. My mind gladly expanded itſelf, as it were, for the reception of new ideas. My curioſity grew more eager in proportion as it was ſupplied with food, and every

every day added ſtrength to the aſſurance that I was no inſignificant and worthleſs being—that I was deſtined to be *ſomething* in this ſcene of exiſtence, and might ſome time lay claim to the gratitude and homage of my fellow-men.

I was far from being, however, monopolized by theſe purſuits. I was formed on purpoſe for the gratification of ſocial intercourſe. To love and to be loved, to exchange hearts, and mingle ſentiments with all the virtuous and amiable whom my good fortune had placed within the circuit of my knowledge, I always eſteemed my higheſt enjoyment and my chief duty.

Carlton and his ſiſter, Mrs. Wentworth and Achſa Fielding, were my moſt valuable aſſociates beyond my own family. With all theſe my correſpondence was frequent and unreſerved, but chiefly with the latter. This lady had dignity and independence, a generous and enlightened ſpirit beyond what her education had taught me to expect. She was circumſpect and cautious in her

deportment, and was not prompt to make advances, or accept them. She withheld her eſteem and confidence until ſhe had full proof of their being deſerved.

I am not ſure that her treatment of me was fully conformable to her rules. My manners, indeed, as ſhe once told me, ſhe had never met with in another. Ordinary rules were ſo totally overlooked in my behaviour, that it ſeemed impoſſible for any one who knew me to adhere to them. No option was left but to admit my claims to friendſhip and confidence inſtantly, or to reject them altogether.

I was not conſcious of this ſingularity. The internal and undiſcovered character of another weighed nothing with me in the queſtion, whether they ſhould be treated with frankneſs or reſerve. I felt no ſcruple, on any occaſion, to diſcloſe every feeling and every event. Any one who would liſten, found me willing to talk. Every talker found me willing to liſten. Every one had my ſympathy and kindneſs, *without* claiming it,

it; but I *claimed* the kindneſs and ſympathy of every one.

Achſa Fielding's countenance beſpoke, I thought, a mind worthy to be known and to be loved. The firſt moment I engaged her attention, I told her ſo. I related the little ſtory of my family, ſpread out before her all my reaſonings and determinations, my notions of right and wrong, my fears and wiſhes. All this was done with ſincerity and fervour, with geſtures, actions, and looks, in which I felt as if my whole ſoul was viſible. Her ſuperior age, ſedateneſs, and prudence gave my deportment a filial freedom and affection, and I was fond of calling her *mamma*.

I particularly dwelt upon the hiſtory of my dear country girl, painted her form and countenance, recounted our dialogues, and related all my ſchemes for making her wiſe, good, and happy. On theſe occaſions my friend would liſten to me with the muteſt attention. I ſhewed her the letters I received, and offered her for her peruſal thoſe

which I wrote in anſwer, before they were ſealed and ſent.

On theſe occaſions ſhe would look by turns on my face and away from me. A varying hue would play upon her cheek, and her eyes were fuller than was common of meaning.

"Such and ſuch," I once ſaid, "are my notions; now what do *you* think?"

"*Think!*" emphatically, and turning ſomewhat aſide, ſhe anſwered, "that you are the moſt—*ſtrange* of human creatures!"

"But tell me," I reſumed, following and ſearching her averted eyes, "am I right? Would you do thus? Can you help me to improve my girl? I wiſh you knew the bewitching little creature. How would that heart overflow with affection and with gratitude towards you! She ſhould be your daughter. No—you are too nearly of an age for that. A ſiſter—her *elder* ſiſter you ſhould be. *That*, when there is no other relation, includes them all. Fond ſiſters

ſiſters you would be, and I the fond brother of you both."

My eyes gliſtened as I ſpoke. In truth I am in that reſpect a mere woman. My friend was more powerfully moved. After a momentary ſtruggle, ſhe burſt into tears.

"Good Heaven!" ſaid I, "what ails you? Are you not well?"

Her looks betrayed an unaccountable confuſion, from which ſhe quickly recovered.—"It was folly to be thus affected. Something ailed me, I believe, but it is paſt. But come; you want ſome lines of finiſhing the deſcription of the *Boa* in La Cepide."

"True; and I have twenty minutes to ſpare. Poor Franks is very ill indeed, but he cannot be ſeen till nine. We'll read till then."

Thus on the wings of pleaſure and improvement paſſed my time, not without ſome hues occaſionally of a darker tint. My heart was now and then detected in ſighing. This occurred when my thoughts glanced

at

at my poor Eliza, and meaſured, as it were, the interval between us.—"We are too—*too* far apart!" thought I.

The beſt ſolace on theſe occaſions was the company of Miſs Fielding, her muſic, her diſcourſe, or ſome book which ſhe ſet me to rehearſing to her. One evening, when preparing to pay her a viſit, I received the following letter from my Eliza.

TO ARTHUR MERVYN.

Curling's, May 6, 1794.

"Where does this letter you promiſed me ſtay all this while? Indeed, Arthur, you torment me more than I deſerve, and more than I could ever find it in my heart to do you. You treat me cruelly. I muſt ſay ſo, though I offend you. I muſt write, though you do not deſerve that I ſhould, and though I fear I am in a humour not very fit for writing. I had better

go

go to my chamber, and weep, weep at your—*unkindneſs*, I was going to ſay; but, perhaps, it is only forgetfulneſs: and yet, what can be more unkind than forgetfulneſs? I am ſure I have never forgotten you. Sleep itſelf, which wraps all other images in forgetfulneſs, only brings you nearer, and makes me ſee you more diſtinctly.

"But where can this letter ſtay? Oh that——huſh, fooliſh girl! If a word of that kind eſcape thy lips, Arthur will be angry with thee, and then, indeed, thou mightſt weep in earneſt. Then thou wouldſt have ſome cauſe for thy tears. More than once already has he almoſt broken thy heart with his reproaches. Sore and weak as it now is, any new reproaches would aſſuredly break it quite!

"I *will* be content. I will be as good an houſewife and dairy woman, ſtir about as briſkly, and ſing as merrily as Peggy Curling. Why not? I am as young, as innocent, and enjoy as good health. Alas! ſhe has reaſon to be merry. She has father, mother, brothers;

brothers; but I have none: and he that was all theſe, and more than all theſe to me, has—*forgotten* me!

"But perhaps it is ſome accident that hinders—perhaps Oliver left the market earlier than he uſed to do, or you miſtook the houſe; or, perhaps, ſome poor creature was ſick, was taken ſuddenly ill, and you were buſy in chafing his clay-cold limbs—it fell to you to wipe the clammy drops from his brow. Such things often happen; don't they, Arthur, to people of your trade? And ſome ſuch thing has happened now; and that was the reaſon you did not write.

"And if ſo, ſhall I repine at your ſilence? Oh, no! At ſuch a time the poor Eliza might eaſily be, and ought to be forgotten. She would not deſerve your love, if ſhe could repine at a ſilence brought about this way.

"And Oh! may it be ſo! May there be nothing worſe than this! If the ſick man——See, Arthur, how my hand trembles! Can you read this ſcrawl? What

is

is always bad, my fears make worſe than ever.

" I muſt not think that. And yet, if it be ſo—if my friend himſelf be ſick, what will become of me? Of me, that ought to cheriſh you and comfort you, that ought to be your nurſe—endure for you your ſickneſs when ſhe cannot remove it.

" Oh that!——I *will* ſpeak out.—Oh that this ſtrange ſcruple had never poſſeſſed you! Why ſhould I *not* be with you? Who can love you and ſerve you as well as I? In ſickneſs and health I will conſole and aſſiſt you. Why will you deprive yourſelf of ſuch a comforter, and ſuch an aid as I would be to you?

" Dear Arthur, think better of it. Let me leave this dreary ſpot, where, indeed, as long as I am thus alone, I can enjoy no comfort. Let me come to you. I will put up with any thing for the ſake of ſeeing you, though it be but once a day. Any garret or cellar in the dirtieſt lane or darkeſt alley, will be good enough for me. I will think it a palace,

a palace, ſo that I can *but* ſee you now and then.

" Do not refuſe—do not argue with me, ſo fond as you always are of arg ing! My heart is ſet upon your compliance. And yet, dearly as I prize your company, I would not aſk it, if I thought there was any thing improper. You ſay there is, and you talk about it in a way that I do not underſtand. For my ſake, you tell me, you refuſe; but let me entreat you to comply for my ſake.

" Your pen cannot teach me like your tongue. You write me long letters, and tell me a great deal in them, but my ſoul droops when I call to mind your voice and your looks, and think how long a time muſt paſs before I ſee you, and hear you again. I have no ſpirit to think upon the words and paper before me. My eye and my thought wander far away.

" I bethink me how many queſtions I might aſk you; how many doubts you might clear up if you were but within hearing—if you were but cloſe to me; but I cannot

cannot aſk them here. I am too poor a creature at the pen, and, ſomehow or another, it always happens I can only write about myſelf or about you. By the time I have ſaid all this, I have tired my fingers; and when I ſet about telling you how this poem and that ſtory have affected me, I am at a loſs for words; I am bewildered and bemazed, as it were.

"It is not ſo when we talk to one another. With your arm about me, and your ſweet face cloſe to mine, I can prattle for ever. Then my heart overflows at my lips. After hours thus ſpent, it ſeems as if there were a thouſand things ſtill to be ſaid. Then I can tell you what the book has told me. I can repeat ſcores of verſes by heart, though I heard them only once read; but it is becauſe *you* have read them to me.

"Then there is nobody here to anſwer my queſtions. They never look into books: they hate books; they think it waſte of time to read. Even Peggy, who

you

you ſay has naturally a ſtrong mind, wonders what I can find to amuſe myſelf in a book. In her playful mood, ſhe is always teazing me to lay it aſide.

" I do not mind her, for I like to read; but if I did not like it before, I could not help doing ſo ever ſince you told me that nobody could gain your love who was not fond of books. And yet, though I like it on that account more than I did, I don't read ſomehow ſo earneſtly, and underſtand ſo well, as I uſed to do when my mind was all at eaſe, always frolicſome, and ever upon *tiptoe*, as I may ſay.

" How ſtrangely (have you not obſerved it?) I am altered of late! I that was ever light of heart, the very ſoul of gaiety, brimful of glee, am now demure as our old *Tabby*, and not half as wiſe. Tabby had wit enough to keep her paws out of the coals, whereas I have——but no matter what. It will never come to paſs, I ſee that. So many reaſons for every thing! Such

Such looking forward! Arthur, are not men ſometimes too *wiſe* to be happy?

"I am now *ſo* grave! Not one ſmile can Peggy ſometimes get from me, though ſhe tries for it the whole day. But I know how it comes. Strange, indeed, if loſing father and ſiſter, and thrown upon the wide world, pennileſs and *friendleſs* too, now that *you* forget me, I ſhould continue to ſmile! No; I never ſhall ſmile again: at leaſt while I ſtay here, I never ſhall, I believe.

"If a certain ſomebody ſuffer me to live with him—*near* him, I mean, perhaps the ſight of him as he enters the door—perhaps the ſound of his voice, aſking—"Where is my Eliza?"—might produce a ſmile: ſuch a one as the very thought produces now—yet not, I hope, ſo tranſient and ſo quickly followed by a tear. Women are born, they ſay, to trouble, and tears are given them for their relief. 'Tis all very true.

"Le it be as I wiſh, will you? If Oliver bring not back good tidings, if he bring not

not a letter from thee, or thy letter ſtill refuſes my requeſt, I don't know what may happen. Conſent, if you love your poor girl.

"ELIZA HADWIN."

CHAP. XIII.

INTERESTING CONVERSATION.

THE reading of this letter, though it made me mournful, did not hinder me from paying the viſit I intended. My friend noticed my diſcompoſure.

"What, Arthur, thou art quite the "*penſeroſo*" to-night. Come, let me cheer thee

thee with a ſong,. Thou ſhalt have thy favourite ditty."

She ſtepped to the inſtrument, and, with more than airy lightneſs, touched and ſung—

"Now knit hands, and beat the ground
"In a light fantaſtic round,
"Till the tell-tale ſun deſcry
"Our conceal'd ſolemnity."

Her muſic, though blitheſome and aerial, was not ſufficient for the end. My cheerfulneſs would not return even at her bidding. She again noticed my ſedateneſs, and enquired into the cauſe.

"This girl of mine," ſaid I, "has infected me with her own ſadneſs. There is a letter I have juſt received."

She took it, and began to read. Meanwhile, I placed myſelf before her, and fixed my eyes ſtedfaſtly upon her features. There is no book in which I read with more pleaſure than the face of woman. *That* is generally more full of meaning, and of better meaning

meaning too, than the hard and inflexible lineaments of man; and *this* woman's face has no parallel.

She read it with visible emotion. Having gone through it, she did not lift her eyes from the paper, but continued silent, as if buried in thought. After some time (for I would not interrupt the pause), she addressed me thus:—

"This girl seems to be very anxious to be with you."

"As much as I am that she should be so."

My friend's countenance betrayed some perplexity. As soon as I perceived it, I said—

"Why are you thus grave?"—Some little confusion appeared, as if she would not have her gravity discovered.—"There again," said I, "new tokens in your face, my good mamma, of something which you will not mention. Yet, sooth to say, this is not your first perplexity. I have noticed it before, and wondered. It happens only when my Eliza is introduced. Something

in

in relation to her it muſt be, but what I cannot imagine. Why does *her* name particularly make you thoughtful, diſturbed, dejected?—There now!—but I muſt know the reaſon. You don't agree with me in my notions of this girl, I fear, and you will not diſcloſe your thoughts."

By this time ſhe had gained her uſual compoſure, and without noticing my comments on her looks, ſaid—"Since you are both of one mind, why does ſhe not leave the country?"

"That cannot be, I believe. Mrs. Stevens ſays it would be diſreputable. I am no proficient in etiquette, and muſt therefore, in affairs of this kind, be guided by thoſe who are. But would to Heaven I were truly her father or brother!—Then all difficulties would be done away."

"Can you ſeriouſly wiſh that?"

"Why, no; I believe it would be more rational to wiſh that the world would ſuffer me to act the fatherly or brotherly part, without the relationſhip."

"And is that the only part you wiſh to act towards this girl?".

"Certainly, the only part."

"You ſurpriſe me. Have you not confeſſed your love for her?"

"I *do* love her. There is nothing upon earth more dear to me than my Eliza."

"But love is of different kinds. She was loved by her father——"

"Leſs than by me. He was a good man, but not of lively feelings. Beſides, he had another daughter, and they ſhared his love between them; but ſhe has no ſiſter to ſhare *my* love. Calamity, too, has endeared her to me; I am all her conſolation, dependance, and hope, and nothing ſurely can induce me to abandon her."

"Her reliance upon you for happineſs," replied my friend, with a ſigh, "is plain enough."

"It is; but why that ſigh? And yet I underſtand it. It remonſtrates with me on my incapacity for her ſupport. I know it well, but it is wrong to be caſt down. I have

have youth, health, and ſpirits, and ought not to deſpair of living for my own benefit and her's. But you ſigh again, and it is impoſſible to keep my courage when *you* ſigh. Do tell me what you mean by it."

"You partly gueſſed the cauſe. She truſts to you for happineſs, but I ſomewhat ſuſpect ſhe truſts in vain."

"In vain! I beſeech you tell me why you think ſo?"

"You ſay you love her—why not then make her your wife?"

"My wife! Surely her extreme youth and my deſtitute condition will account for that."

"She is fifteen; the age of delicate fervour, of inartificial love, and ſuitable enough for marriage. As to your condition, you may live more eaſily together than apart. She has no falſe taſte or perverſe deſires to gratify. She has been trained in ſimple modes and habits. Beſides, that objection can be removed another way. But are theſe all your objections?"

" Her youth I object to, merely in connection with her mind. She is too little improved to be my wife. She wants that ſolidity of mind, that maturity of intelligence which ten years more may poſſibly give her, but which ſhe cannot have at this age."

" You are a very prudential youth. Then you are willing to wait ten years for a wife?"

" Does that follow? Becauſe my Eliza will not be qualified for wedlock in leſs time, does it follow that I muſt wait for her?"

" I ſpoke on the ſuppoſition that you loved her."

" And that is true; but love is ſatisfied with ſtudying her happineſs, as her father or brother. Some years hence—perhaps in half-a-year, for this paſſion called wedded, or *marriage-wiſhing* love, is of ſudden growth, my mind may change, and nothing may content me but to have Eliza for my wife. Yet I do not expect it."

" Then

"Then you are determined againſt marriage with this girl?"

"Of courſe: until that love comes, which I feel not now, but which no doubt will come when Eliza has had the benefit of five or eight years more improvement, unleſs previouſly excited by another."

"All this is ſtrange, Arthur. I have heretofore ſuppoſed that you actually loved (I mean with the *marriage-ſeeking* paſſion) your Eliza."

"I believe I once did; but it happened at a time when marriage was improper, in the life of her father and ſiſter, and when I had never known in what female excellence conſiſted. Since that time my happier lot has caſt me among women ſo far above Eliza Hadwin—ſo far above and ſo widely different from any thing which time is likely to make her, that I own nothing appears more unlikely than that I ſhall ever love her."

"Are you not a little capricious in that reſpect, my good friend? You have praiſed her as rich in natural endowments—as

having an artleſs purity and rectitude of mind, which ſomewhat ſuperſedes the uſe of formal education—as being full of ſweetneſs and tenderneſs, and in her perſon a very angel of lovelineſs."

"All that is true. I never ſaw features and ſhape ſo delicately beautiful—I never knew ſo young a mind ſo quickſighted and ſo firm; but, nevertheleſs, ſhe is not the creature whom I would call my *wife*. My boſom ſlave, counſellor, friend, the mother, the pattern, the tutoreſs of my children, muſt be a different creature."

"But what are the attributes of this *deſirable* which Eliza wants?"

"Every thing ſhe wants. Age, capacity, acquirements, perſon, features, hair, complexion—all, all are different from this girl's."

"And pray of what kind may they be?"

"I cannot portray them in words—— but yes, I can:—the creature whom I ſhall worſhip—(it ſounds oddly, but I verily believe the ſentiment which I ſhall feel for my

my wife will be more a-kin to worſhip than any thing elſe)—I ſhall never love but ſuch a creature as I now image to myſelf, and ſuch a creature will deſerve, or almoſt deſerve, worſhip—but this creature, I was going to ſay, muſt be the exact counterpart, my good mamma—of *yourſelf*."

This was ſaid very earneſtly, and with eyes and manners that fully expreſſed my earneſtneſs. Perhaps my expreſſions were unwittingly ſtrong and emphatic, for ſhe ſtarted and bluſhed; but the cauſe of her diſcompoſure, whatever it was, was quickly removed, and ſhe ſaid—"Poor Eliza, this will be ſad news to thee!"

"Heaven forbid!" ſaid I. "Of what moment can my opinions be to her?"

"Strange queſtioner that thou art! thou knoweſt that her gentle heart is touched with love. See how it ſhews itſelf in the tender and inimitable ſtrain of this epiſtle. Does not this ſweet ingenuouſneſs bewitch you?"

"It does ſo; and I love beyond expreſſion the ſweet girl: but my love is in

ſome inconceivable way different from the paſſion which that *other* creature will produce. She is no ſtranger to my thoughts. I will impart every thought over and over to her. I queſtion not but I ſhall make her happy without forfeiting my own."

"Would marriage with her be a forfeiture of your happineſs?"

"Not abſolutely, or for ever, I believe. I love her company. Her abſence for a long time is irkſome. I cannot expreſs the delight with which I ſee and hear her. To mark her features beaming with vivacity, playful in her pleaſures, to hold her in my arms, and liſten to her prattle, always muſically voluble, always ſweetly tender, or artleſsly intelligent—and this you will ſay is the deareſt privilege of marriage: and ſo it is, and dearly ſhould I prize it; and yet I fear my heart would droop as often as that *other* image ſhould occur to my fancy: for then, you know, it would occur as ſomething never to be poſſeſſed by me. Now this image might, indeed, ſeldom occur. The intervals,

intervals, at leaſt, would be ſerene. It would be my intereſt to prolong theſe intervals as much as poſſible, and my endeavours to this end would, no doubt, have ſome effect. Beſides, the bitterneſs of this reflection would be leſſened by contemplating, at the ſame time, the happineſs of my beloved girl. I ſhould likewiſe have to remember that to continue unmarried would not neceſſarily ſecure me the poſſeſſion of the *other* good——"

"But theſe reflections, my friend," interrupted ſhe, "are of as much force to induce you to marry, as to reconcile you to marriage already contracted."

"Perhaps they are. Aſſuredly I have not a hope that the *fancied* excellence will ever be mine. Such happineſs is not the lot of humanity, and is, leaſt of all, within my reach."

"Your diffidence," replied my friend, in a timorous accent, "has not many examples; but your character, without doubt,

is all your own—poſſeſſing all, and diſclaiming all is, in few words, your picture."

"I ſcarcely underſtand you. Do you think I ever ſhall be happy to that degree which I have imagined? Think you I ſhall ever meet with an exact copy of *yourſelf?*"

"Unfortunate you will be, if you do not meet with many better. Your Eliza, in perſonals, is beyond meaſure *my* ſuperior; and in mind, allowing for difference in years, quite as much ſo."

"But that," returned I, with quickneſs and fervour, "is not the object. The very counterpart of *you* I want; neither worſe, nor better, nor different in any thing. Juſt ſuch form, ſuch features, ſuch hues; juſt that melting voice, and, above all, the ſame habits of thinking and converſing. In thought, word, and deed—geſture, look, and form—that rare and precious creature whom I ſhall love, muſt be your reſemblance—your——"

"Have done with theſe compariſons," interrupted

interrupted ſhe, in ſome hurry, "and let us return to the country girl, thy Eliza. You once, my friend, wiſhed me to treat this girl of your's as my ſiſter. Do you know what the duties of a ſiſter are?"

"They imply no more kindneſs or affection than you already feel towards my Eliza. Are you not her ſiſter?"

"I ought to have been ſo. I ought to have been proud of the relation you aſcribe to me, but I have not performed any of its duties. I bluſh to think upon the coldneſs and perverſeneſs of my heart. With ſuch means as I poſſeſs of giving happineſs to others, I have been thoughtleſs and inactive to a ſtrange degree. Perhaps, however, it is not yet too late. Are you ſtill willing to inveſt me with all the rights of an elder ſiſter over this girl? And will ſhe conſent, think you?"

"Certainly ſhe will; ſhe has."

"Then the firſt act of ſiſterſhip will be to take her from the country, from perſons on whoſe kindneſs ſhe has no natural claim,

whoſe manners and characters are unlike her own, and with whom nó improvement can be expected, and bring her back to her ſiſter's houſe and boſom, to provide for her ſubſiſtence and education, and watch over her happineſs.

"I will not be a nominal ſiſter—I will not be a ſiſter by halves; *all* the rights of that relation I will have, or none. As for you, you have claims upon her, on which I muſt be permitted to judge, as becomes the elder ſiſter, who, by the loſs of all other relations, muſt occupy the place, poſſeſs the rights, and fulfil the duties of father, mother, and brother.

"She has now arrived at an age when longer to remain in a cold and churliſh ſoil, will ſtunt her growth, and wither her bloſſoms. We muſt haſten to tranſplant her to a genial element, and a garden well encloſed. Having ſo long neglected this charming plant, it becomes me henceforth to take her wholly to myſelf.

"And now, for it is no longer in her or

your power to take back the gift, ſince ſhe is fully mine, I will charge you with the office of conducting her hither. I grant it to you as a favour. Will you go?"

"Go!—I will fly," I exclaimed in an ecſtacy of joy, "on pinions ſwifter than the wind! Not the lingering of an inſtant will I bear! Look! one, two, three—thirty minutes after nine! I will reach Curling's gate by the morn's dawn. I will put my girl into a chaiſe, and by noon ſhe ſhall throw herſelf into the arms of her ſiſter. But, firſt, ſhall I not in ſome way manifeſt my gratitude?"

My ſenſes were bewildered, and I knew not what I did. I intended to kneel as to my mother, or my Deity; but, inſtead of that, I claſped her in my arms, and kiſſed her lips fervently. I ſtaid not to diſcover the effects of this inſanity, but left the room and the houſe, and calling for a moment at Stevens's, left word with the ſervant, my friend being gone abroad, that I ſhould not return till the morrow.

Never

Never was a lighter heart, a gaiety more overflowing, and more buoyant than mine; all cold from a boiſterous night, at a chilly ſeaſon, all wearineſs from a rugged and miry road, were charmed away. I might have rode, but I could not brook delay—even the delay of enquiring for and equipping a horſe. I might thus have ſaved myſelf fatigue, and have loſt no time; but my mind was in too great a tumult for deliberation and forethought. I ſaw nothing but the image of my dear girl, whom my tidings would render happy.

The way was longer than my fond imagination had foreſeen. I did not reach Curling's till an hour after ſunriſe. The diſtance was full thirty-five miles. As I haſtened up the green lane leading to the houſe, I ſpied my Eliza paſſing through a covered way between the dwelling and kitchen. I caught her eye. She ſtopped, and held up her hands, and then ran into my arms.

"What means my girl? Why this catching of the breath? Why this ſobbing? Look

at

at me, my love! It is Arthur—he who has treated you with forgetfulneſs, neglect, and cruelty!"

"Oh, do not!" ſhe replied, hiding her face with her hand. "One ſingle reproach, added to my own, will kill me! That fooliſh, wicked letter—I could tear my fingers for writing it!"

"But," ſaid I, "I will kiſs them!"—and put them to my lips. "They have told me your wiſhes—they have enabled me to gratify them. I have come to carry thee this very moment to town."

"Lord bleſs me, Arthur!" ſaid ſhe, loſt in a ſweet confuſion, and her cheeks, always glowing, glowing ſtill more deeply—"indeed, I did not mean——I meant only——I will ſtay here—I would rather ſtay——"

"It grieves me to hear that," ſaid I with earneſtneſs; "I thought I was ſtudying our mutual happineſs."

"It grieves you! Don't ſay ſo; I would not grieve you for the world!—but, indeed, it

it is too ſoon. Such a girl as I, am not yet fit to—live in your city."

Again ſhe hid her glowing face in my boſom.

"Sweet conſciouſneſs! heavenly innocence!" thought I; "may Achſa's conjectures prove falſe!—You have miſtaken my deſign, for I do not intend to carry you to town with ſuch a view as you have hinted, but merely to place you with a beloved friend—with Achſa Fielding, of whom already you know ſo much, where we ſhall enjoy each other's company without reſtraint or intermiſſion."

I then proceeded to diſcloſe to her the plan ſuggeſted by my friend, and to explain all the conſequences that would flow from it. I need not ſay that ſhe aſſented to the ſcheme. She was all rapture and gratitude. Preparations for departure were eaſily and ſpeedily made. I hired a chaiſe of a neighbouring farmer; and, according to my promiſe, by noon the ſame day, delivered the timid

timid and baſhful girl into the arms of her new ſiſter.

She was received with the utmoſt tenderneſs, not only by Achſa Fielding, but by all my friends. Her affectionate heart was encouraged to pour forth all its feeling as into the boſom of a mother. She was reinſpired with confidence. Her want of experience was ſupplied by the gentleſt admonitions and inſtructions. In every plan for her improvement, ſuggeſted by her new *mamma*, for ſhe never called her by any other name, ſhe engaged with docility and eagerneſs; and her behaviour and her progreſs exceeded the moſt ſanguine hopes that I had formed, as to the ſoftneſs of her temper, and the acuteneſs of her genius.

Thoſe graces which a poliſhed education, and intercourſe with the better claſſes of ſociety, are adapted to give, ſhe poſſeſſed, in ſome degree, by a native and intuitive refinement and ſagacity of mind. All that was to be obtained from actual obſervation and

and inſtruction, was obtained without difficulty; and in a ſhort time nothing but the affectionate ſimplicity and unperverted feelings of the country girl beſpoke the original condition.

"What art ſo buſy about, Arthur? Always at thy pen of late. Come, I muſt know the fruit of all this toil and all this meditation. I am determined to ſcrape acquaintance with Haller and Linnæus. I will begin this very day. All one's friends you know ſhould be our's. Love has made many a patient, and let me ſee if it cannot, in my caſe, make a phyſician. But, firſt, what is all this writing about?"

"Mrs. Wentworth has put me upon a ſtrange taſk—not diſagreeable, however, but ſuch as I ſhould, perhaps, have declined, had not the abſence of my Eliza and her mamma made the time hang ſomewhat heavy. I have, oftener than once, and far more circumſtantially than now, told her my adventures, but ſhe is not ſatisfied;—ſhe wants a written narrative, for ſome purpoſe which ſhe

ſhe tells me ſhe will diſcloſe to me hereafter.

"Luckily, my friend Stevens has ſaved me more than half the trouble. He has done me the favour to compile much of my hiſtory with his own hand. I cannot imagine what could prompt him to ſo weariſome an undertaking; but he ſays that adventures and a deſtiny ſo ſingular as mine, ought not to be abandoned to forgetfulneſs, like any vulgar and *every-day* occurrence. Beſides, when he wrote it, he ſuſpected that it might be neceſſary to the ſafety of my reputation and my life, from the conſequences of my connection with Welbeck. Time has annihilated that danger; all enmities and all ſuſpicions are buried with that ill-fated wretch. Wortley has been won by my behaviour, and confides in my integrity now as much as he formerly ſuſpected it. I am glad, however, that the taſk was performed; it has ſaved me a world of writing. I had only to take up the broken thread, and bring it down to the period of my preſent happineſs; and this

this was done juſt as you tripped along the entry this morning.

"To bed, my friend; it is late, and this delicate frame is not half ſo able to encounter fatigue as a youth ſpent in the hayfield and the dairy might have been expected to be."

"I will; but let me take theſe ſheets with me. I will read them, I am determined, before I ſleep, and watch if you have told the whole truth."

"Do ſo, if you pleaſe; but remember one thing:—Mrs. Wentworth requeſted me to write, not as if it were deſigned for her peruſal, but for thoſe who have no previous knowledge of her or of me. It was an odd requeſt—I cannot imagine what ſhe means by it; but ſhe never acts without good reaſon, and I have done ſo. And now withdraw, my dear, and farewel!"

CHAP. XIV.

ACHSA FIELDING'S TALE.

MOVE on, my quill! wait not for my guidance! reanimated with thy maſter's ſpirit, all-airy light!—An heyday rapture—a mounting impulſe ſways him—lifts him from the earth!

I muſt, coſt what it will, rein in this upward-pulling, forward-urging—what ſhall I call it? But there are times, and now is one of them, when words are poor.

It will not do!——Down this hill—up that ſteep—through this thicket—over that hedge—I have *laboured* to fatigue myſelf—

to

to reconcile me to repoſe—to lolling on a ſofa—to poring over a book—to any thing that might win for my heart a reſpite from theſe throbs—to deceive me into a few *tolerable* moments of forgetfulneſs.

Let me ſee—they tell me this is Monday night. Only three days yet to come! If thus reſtleſs to-day—if my heart thus bounds till its manſion ſcarcely can hold it, what muſt be my ſtate to-morrow?—what next day?—what as the hour haſtens on—as the ſun deſcends—as my hand touches her in ſign of wedded unity, of love without interval, of concord without end?

I muſt quell theſe tumults; they will diſable me elſe—they will wear out all my ſtrength—they will drain away life itſelf. But who could have thought!—So ſoon! Not three months ſince I firſt ſet eyes upon her—not three weeks ſince our plighted love, and only three days to terminate ſuſpenſe, and give me *all!*

I muſt compel myſelf to quiet—to ſleep; I muſt find ſome refuge from anticipations ſo

ſo excruciating. All extremes are agonies. A joy like this is too big for this narrow tenement; I muſt thruſt it forth—I muſt bar and bolt it out for a time, or theſe frail walls will burſt aſunder. The pen is a pacifier; it checks the mind's career—it circumſcribes her wanderings—it traces out, and compels us to adhere to one path. It ever was my friend; often it has blunted my vexations—huſhed my ſtormy paſſions—turned my peeviſhneſs to ſoothing, my fierce revenge to heart-diſſolving pity.

Perhaps it will befriend me now. It may temper my impetuous wiſhes, lull my intoxication, and render my happineſs ſupportable; and, indeed, it has produced partly this effect already. My blood, within the few minutes thus employed, flows with leſs rapidity; my thoughts range themſelves in leſs diſorder—and now that the conqueſt is effected, what ſhall I ſay?—I muſt continue at the pen, or ſhall immediately relapſe.

What ſhall I ſay?—Let me look back upon the

the ſteps that led me hither. Let me recount preliminaries. I cannot do better.

And, firſt, as to Achſa Fielding—to deſcribe this woman.

To recount, in brief, ſo much of her hiſtory as has come to my knowledge, will beſt account for that zeal, almoſt to idolatry, with which ſhe has, ever ſince I thoroughly knew her, been regarded by me.

Never ſaw I one to whom the term *lovely* more truly belonged; and yet in ſtature ſhe is too low—in complexion, dark and almoſt ſallow—and her eyes, though black and of piercing luſtre, has a caſt which I cannot well explain; it leſſens, without deſtroying their luſtre and their force to charm: but all perſonal defects are outweighed by her heart and her intellect. There is the ſecret of her power to entrance the ſoul of the liſtener and beholder. It is not only when ſhe ſings, that her utterance is muſical—it is not only when the occaſion is urgent, and the topic momentous, that her eloquence

eloquence is rich and flowing—they are always ſo.

I had vowed to love her and ſerve her, and been her frequent viſitant long before I was acquainted with her paſt life. I had caſually picked up ſome intelligence from others, or from her own remarks. I knew very ſoon that ſhe was Engliſh by birth, and had been only a year and a half in America—that ſhe had ſcarcely paſſed her twenty-fifth year, and was ſtill embelliſhed with all the graces of youth. I alſo learned, with aſtoniſhment, (having in the earlieſt period of our acquaintance conſidered, and addreſſed her at all times as if ſhe had been unmarried,) that ſhe had been a wife, but was uninformed whether the knot had been untied by death or divorce; and that ſhe poſſeſſed conſiderable, and even ſplendid fortune; but the exact amount, and all beſides theſe particulars, were unknown to me till ſome time after our acquaintance was begun.

One evening ſhe had been talking very earneſtly on the influence annexed in Great Britain to birth, and had given me ſome

examples of this influence. Meanwhile, my eyes were fixed ſtedfaſtly on her's. The peculiarity in their expreſſion never before affected me ſo ſtrongly. A vague reſemblance to ſomething ſeen elſewhere on the ſame day, occurred, and occaſioned me to exclaim ſuddenly in a pauſe of her diſcourſe—"As I live, my good mamma, thoſe eyes of your's have told me a ſecret! I almoſt think they ſpoke to me; and I am not leſs amazed at the ſtrangeneſs than at the diſtinctneſs of their ſtory."

"And prithee what have they ſaid?"

"Perhaps I was miſtaken; I might have been deceived by a fancied voice, or have confounded one word with another near akin to it; but let me die, if I did not think they ſaid that you were—*a Jeweſs!*"

At this ſound her features were inſtantly veiled with the deepeſt ſorrow and confuſion. She put her hand to her eyes—the tears ſtarted, and ſhe ſobbed. My ſurpriſe at this effect of my words was equal to my contrition. I beſought her to pardon me for having thus unknowingly alarmed and grieved her.

After

After ſhe had regained ſome compoſure, ſhe ſaid—" You have not offended, Arthur. Your ſurmiſe was juſt and natural, and could not always have eſcaped you. Connected with that word are many ſources of anguiſh, which time has not, and never will dry up; and the leſs I think of paſt events, the leſs will my peace be diſturbed. I was deſirous that you ſhould know nothing of me, but what you ſee—nothing but the preſent and the future, merely that no alluſions might occur in our converſation, which will call up ſorrows and regrets that will avail nothing.

" I now perceive the folly of endeavouring to keep you in ignorance, and ſhall therefore, once for all, inform you of what has befallen me, that your enquiries and ſuggeſtions may be made, and fully ſatisfied at once, and your curioſity have no motive for calling back my thoughts to what I ardently deſire to bury in oblivion.

" My father was indeed a *Jew*, and one of the moſt opulent of his nation in London; a Portugueſe by birth, but came to London

when a boy. He had few of the moral or external qualities of Jews; for I suppose there is some justice in the obloquy that follows them so closely. He was frugal without meanness, and cautious in his dealings without extortion. I need not fear to say this, for it was the general voice.

"Me, an only child, and of course the darling of my parents, they trained up in the most liberal manner. My education was purely English; I learned the same things, and of the same masters, with my neighbours. Except frequenting their Church, and repeating their creed, and partaking of the same food, I saw no difference between them and me. Hence I grew more indifferent, perhaps, than was proper to the distinctions of religion. They were never enforced upon me; no pains were taken to fill me with scruples and antipathies; they never stood, as I may say, upon the threshold—they were often thought upon, but were vague, and easily eluded or forgotten.

"Hence it was that my heart too readily admitted

admitted impreſſions that more zeal and more parental caution would have ſaved me from. They could ſcarcely be avoided, as my ſociety was wholly Engliſh; and my youth, my education, and my father's wealth made me an object of much attention: and the ſame cauſes that lulled to ſleep my own watchfulneſs, had the ſame effect upon that of others. To regret, or to praiſe this remiſſneſs, is now too late: certain it is that my deſtiny, and not a happy deſtiny, was fixed by it.

"The fruit of this remiſſneſs was a paſſion for one who fully returned it. Almoſt as young as I, who was only ſixteen, he knew as little as myſelf what obſtacles the difference of our births was likely to raiſe between us. His father, Sir Ralph Fielding, a man nobly born, high in office, ſplendidly allied, could not be expected to conſent to the marriage of his eldeſt ſon, in ſuch green youth, to the daughter of an alien, a Portugueſe, a Jew; but theſe impediments were not ſeen

by my ignorance, and were overlooked by the youth's paſſion.

" But, ſtrange to tell, what common prudence would have ſo confidently predicted, did not happen! Sir Ralph had a numerous family, likely to be ſtill more ſo—had but ſlender patrimony—the income of his offices nearly made up his all. The young man was headſtrong, impetuous, and would probably diſregard the inclinations of his family: yet the father would not conſent but on one condition—that of my admiſſion to the Engliſh Church.

" No very ſtrenuous oppoſition to theſe terms could be expected from me. At ſo thoughtleſs an age, with an education ſo unfavourable to religious impreſſions—ſwayed likewiſe by the ſtrongeſt of human paſſions—made ſomewhat impatient, by the company I kept, of the diſrepute and ſcorn to which the Jewiſh nation are every where condemned, I could not be expected to be very averſe to the ſcheme.

" My

"My fears as to what my father's deciſion would be, were ſoon at an end: he loved his child too well to thwart her wiſhes in ſo eſſential a point. Finding in me no ſcruples, no unwillingneſs, he thought it abſurd to be ſcrupulous for me. My own heart having abjured my religion, it was abſurd to make any difficulty about a formal renunciation. Theſe were his avowed reaſons for concurrence; but time ſhewed that he had probably other reaſons, founded, indeed, on his regard for my happineſs, but ſuch as, if they had been known, would probably have ſtrengthened into invincible the reluctance of my lover's family.

"No marriage was ever attended with happier preſages. The numerous relations of my huſband admitted me with the utmoſt cordiality among them. My father's tenderneſs was unabated by this change, and thoſe humiliations to which I had before been expoſed, were now no more; and every tie was ſtrengthened at the end of a year, by the feelings of a *mother*. I had need, indeed,

to know a ſeaſon of happineſs, that I might be fitted to endure the ſad reverſes that ſucceeded. One after the other my diſaſters came, each one more heavy than the laſt, and in ſuch ſwift ſucceſſion, that they hardly left me time to breathe.

"I had ſcarcely left my chamber—I had ſcarcely recovered my uſual health, and was able to preſs with true fervour the new and precious gift to my boſom, when melancholy tidings came.—I was in the country, at the ſeat of my father-in-law, when the meſſenger arrived.

"A ſhocking tale it was, and told abruptly, with every unpitying aggravation! I hinted to you once my father's death. The *kind* of death—Oh my friend! it was horrible! He was then a placid, venerable old man, though many ſymptoms of diſquiet had long before been diſcovered by my mother's watchful tenderneſs. Yet none could ſuſpect him capable of ſuch a deed; for none, ſo carefully had he conducted his affairs, ſuſpected the havoc that miſchance had made of his property.

"I,

" I, that had ſo much reaſon to love my father—I will leave you to imagine how I was affected by a cataſtrophe ſo dreadful, ſo unlooked-for. Much leſs could I ſuſpect the cauſe of his deſpair; yet he had foreſeen his ruin before my marriage, had reſolved to defer it, for his daughter's and his wife's ſake, as long as poſſible, but had ſtill determined not to ſurvive the day that ſhould reduce him to indigence. The deſperate act was thus preconcerted—thus deliberate.

" The true ſtate of his affairs was laid open by his death. The failure of great mercantile houſes at Frankfort and Liege was the cauſe of his diſaſters. Thus were my proſpects ſhut in. That wealth, which no doubt furniſhed the chief inducement with my huſband's family to concur in his choice, was now ſuddenly exchanged for poverty.

" Bred up, as I had been, in pomp and luxury—conſcious that my wealth was my chief ſecurity from the contempt of the proud and bigotted, and my chief title to the

ſtation to which I had been raiſed, and which I the more delighted in, becauſe it enabled me to confer ſo great obligations on my huſband, what reverſe could be harder than this, and how much bitterneſs was added by it to the grief occaſioned by the violent end of my father!

"Yet loſs of fortune, though it mortified my pride, did not prove my worſt calamity. Perhaps it was ſcarcely to be ranked with evils, ſince it furniſhed a touchſtone by which my huſband's affections were to be tried, eſpecially as the iſſue of the trial was auſpicious; for my misfortune ſeemed only to heighten the intereſt which my character had made for me in the hearts of all that knew me. The paternal regards of Sir Ralph had always been tender, but that tenderneſs ſeemed now to be redoubled.

"New events made this conſolation ſtill more neceſſary. My unhappy mother—ſhe was nearer to the dreadful ſcene when it happened—had no ſurviving object to beguile her ſorrow; was rendered, by long habit,

habit, more dependant upon fortune than her child!

"A melancholy always mute was the firſt effect upon my mother: nothing could charm her eye or her ear. Sweet ſounds that ſhe once loved, and eſpecially when her darling child was the warbler, were heard no longer. How, with ſtreaming eyes, have I ſat, and watched the dear lady, and endeavoured to catch her eye, to rouſe her attention!—But I muſt not think of theſe things.

"But even this diſtreſs was little in compariſon with what was to come. A frenzy thus mute, motionleſs, and vacant, was ſucceeded by fits, talkative, outrageous, requiring inceſſant ſuperintendence, reſtraint, and even violence.

"Why led you me thus back to my ſad remembrances? Excuſe me for the preſent. I will tell you the reſt ſome other time—to-morrow."

To-morrow, accordingly, my friend reſumed her ſtory.

"Let me now make an end," ſaid ſhe,

" of my mournful narrative, and never, I charge you, do any thing to revive it again.

" Deep as was my deſpondency occaſioned by theſe calámities, I was not deſtitute of ſome joy. My huſband and my child were lovely and affectionate. In their careſſes, in their welfare, I found peace; and might ſtill have found it, had there not been——But why ſhould I open afreſh wounds which time has imperfectly cloſed? But the ſtory muſt have ſome time been told to you, and the ſooner it is told, and diſmiſſed to forgetfulneſs, the better.

" My ill fate led me into company with a woman too well known in the idle and diſſipated circles. Her character was not unknown to me. There was nothing in her features or air to obviate diſadvantageous prepoſſeſſions. I ſought not her intercourſe—I rather ſhunned it, as unpleaſing and diſcreditable; but ſhe would not be repulſed. Self-invited, ſhe made herſelf my frequent gueſt, took unſolicited part in my concerns, did

did me kind offices, and, at length, in ſpite of my counter inclination, won upon my ſympathy and gratitude.

" No one in the world, did I fondly think, had I leſs reaſon to fear than Mrs. Waring. Her character excited not the ſlighteſt apprehenſion for my own ſafety. She was upwards of forty—nowiſe remarkable for grace or beauty—tawdry in her dreſs—accuſtomed to render more conſpicuous the traces of age by her attempts to hide them—the mother of a numerous family, with a mind but ſlenderly cultivated—always careful too to ſave appearances—ſtudiouſly preſerving diſtance with my huſband—and he, like myſelf, enduring rather than wiſhing her ſociety. What could I fear from the arts of ſuch an one?

" But, alas! the woman had conſummate addreſs—patience, too, that nothing could tire—watchfulneſs that none could detect—inſinuation the wileſt and moſt ſubtile. Thus wound ſhe herſelf into my affections by an unexampled perſeverance in ſeeming kindneſs,

kindneſs, by tender confidence, by artful gloſſes of paſt miſconduct, by ſelf-rebukes and feigned contritions.

" Never were ſtratagems ſo intricate, diſſimulation ſo profound! But ſtill, that ſuch an one ſhould ſeduce my huſband, young, generous, ambitious, impatient of contumely and reproach, and ſurely not indifferent—before this fatal intercourſe, not indifferent to his wife and child!—Yet ſo it was!

" I ſaw his diſcontents, his ſtruggles; I heard him curſe this woman, and the more deeply for my attempts, unconſcious as I was of her machinations, to reconcile them to each other, to do away what ſeemed a cauſeleſs indignation, or antipathy againſt her. How little I ſuſpected the nature of the conflict in his heart between a new paſſion and the claims of pride—of conſcience and of humanity—the claims of a child and a wife—a wife already in affliction, and placing all that yet remained of happineſs in the firmneſs of his virtue—in the continuance

nuance of his love—a wife, at the very hour of his meditated flight, full of terrors at the near approach of an event, whose agonies demand a double share of a husband's supporting, encouraging love——

"Good Heaven! for what evils are some of thy creatures reserved! Resignation to thy decree, in the last and most cruel distress, was indeed a hard task!

"He was gone. Some unavoidable engagement calling him to Hamburgh was pleaded. Yet to leave me at such an hour! I dared not upbraid, nor object. The tale was so specious! The fortunes of a friend depended on his punctual journey.—The falsehood of his story too soon made itself known. He was gone in company with his detested paramour!

"Yet though my vigilance was easily deceived, it was not so with others. A creditor, who had his bond for three thousand pounds, pursued, and arrested him at Harwich. He was thrown into prison, but his companion—let me at least say that in her praise—

praiſe—would not deſert him. She took a lodging near the place of his confinement, and ſaw him daily. That, had ſhe not done it, and had my perſonal condition allowed, ſhould have been my province.

" Indignation and grief haſtened the painful criſis with me. I did not weep that the ſecond fruit of this unhappy union ſaw not the light. I wept only that this hour of agony was not to its unfortunate mother the laſt.

" I felt not anger; I had nothing but compaſſion for Fielding. Gladly would I have recalled him to my arms and to virtue. I wrote, adjuring him, by all our paſt joys, to return; vowing only gratitude for his new affection, and claiming only the recompence of ſeeing him reſtored to his family, to liberty, to reputation.

" But, alas! Fielding had a good, but a proud heart. He looked upon his error with remorſe, with ſelf-deteſtation, and with the fatal belief that it could not be retrieved; ſhame made him withſtand all my reaſonings and

and perſuaſions, and, in the hurry of his feelings, he made ſolemn vows that he would, in the moment of reſtored liberty, abjure his country and his family for ever. He bore indignantly the yoke of his new attachment, but he ſtrove in vain to ſhake it off. Her behaviour, always yielding, doting, ſupplicative, preſerved him in her fetters. Though upbraided, ſpurned, and baniſhed from his preſence, ſhe would not leave him; but by new efforts and new artifices, ſoothed, appeaſed, and won again, and kept his tenderneſs.

"What my entreaties were unable to effect, his father could not hope to accompliſh. He offered to take him from priſon; the creditor offered to cancel the bond, if he would return to me; but this condition he refuſed. All his kindred, and one who had been his boſom-friend from childhood, joined in beſeeching his compliance with theſe conditions; but his pride, his dread of my merited reproaches, the merits and diſſuaſions of his new companion, whoſe ſacrifices for

for his ſake had not been ſmall, were obſtacles which nothing could ſubdue.

" Far, indeed, was I from impoſing theſe conditions: I waited only till, by certain arrangements, I could gather enough to pay his debts, to enable him to execute his vow. Empty would have been my claims to his affection if I could have ſuffered, with the means of his deliverance in my hands, my huſband to remain a moment in priſon. The remains of my father's vaſt fortune was a jointure of a thouſand pounds a year, ſettled on my mother, and after her death on me. My mother's helpleſs condition put this revenue into my diſpoſal. By theſe means was I enabled, without the knowledge of my father-in-law or my huſband, to purchaſe the debt, and diſmiſs him from priſon. He ſet out inſtantly in company with his paramour to France.

" When ſomewhat recovered from the ſhock of this calamity, I took up my abode with my mother. What ſhe had was enough, as you perhaps will think, for plentiful

tiful ſubſiſtence ; but to us, with habits of a different kind, it was little better than poverty. That reflection, my father's memory, my mother's deplorable ſtate, which every year grew worſe, and the late misfortune, were the chief companions of my thoughts.

" The dear child, whoſe ſmiles were uninterrupted by his mother's afflictions, was ſome conſolation in my ſolitude. To his inſtruction and to my mother's wants, all my hours were devoted. I was ſometimes not without the hope of better days. Full as my mind was of Fielding's merits, convinced by former proofs of his ardent and generous ſpirit, I truſted that time and reflection would deſtroy that ſpell by which he was now bound.

" For ſome time the progreſs of theſe reflections was not known. In leaving England, Fielding dropped all correſpondence and connection with his native country. He parted with the woman at Rouen, leaving no trace behind him by which ſhe might

might follow him, as ſhe wiſhed to do. She never returned to England, but died a twelvemonth afterwards in Switzerland.

" As to me, I had only to muſe day and night upon the poſſible deſtiny of this beloved fugitive. His incenſed father cared not for him. He had caſt him out of his paternal affections, ceaſed to make enquiries reſpecting him, and even wiſhed never to hear of him again. My boy ſucceeded to my huſband's place in his grandfather's affections, and in the hopes and views of the family; and his mother wanted nothing which their compaſſionate and reſpectful love could beſtow.

" Three long and tedious years paſſed away, and no tidings were received. Whether he were living or dead, nobody could tell. At length, an Engliſh traveller, going out of the cuſtomary road from Italy, met with Fielding in a town in the Venaiſſin. His manners, habit, and language had become French. He ſeemed unwilling to be recogniſed by an old acquaintance; but not

not being able to avoid this, and becoming gradually familiar, he informed the traveller of many particulars in his preſent ſituation. It appeared that he had made himſelf uſeful to a neighbouring *Seigneur*, in whoſe *chateau* he had long lived on the footing of a brother. France he had reſolved to make his future country; and among other changes for that end, he had laid aſide his Engliſh name, and taken that of his patron, which was *Perrin*. He had endeavoured to compenſate himſelf for all other privations, by devoting himſelf to rural amuſements and to ſtudy.

"He carefully ſhunned all enquiries reſpecting me; but when my name was mentioned by his friend, who knew well all that had happened, and my general welfare, together with that of his ſon aſſerted, he ſhewed deep ſenſibility, and even conſented that I ſhould be made acquainted with his ſituation.

"I cannot deſcribe the effect of this intelligence on me. My hopes of bringing him back to me were ſuddenly revived. I wrote

wrote him a letter, in which I poured forth my whole heart; but his anſwer contained avowals of all his former reſolutions, to which time had only made his adherence more eaſy. A ſecond and third letter were written, and an offer made to follow him to his retreat, and ſhare his exile; but all my efforts availed nothing. He ſolemnly and repeatedly renounced all the claims of a huſband over me, and abſolved me from every obligation as a wife.

"His part in this correſpondence was performed without harſhneſs or contempt. A ſtrange mixture there was of pathos and indifference, of tenderneſs and reſolution. Hence I continually derived hope, which time, however, brought no nearer to certainty.

At the opening of the Revolution, the name of Perrin appeared among the Deputies to the Conſtituent Aſſembly, for the diſtrict in which he reſided. He had thus ſucceeded in gaining all the rights of a French citizen, and the hopes of his return became

became almoſt extinct; but that, and every other hope reſpecting him has ſince been totally extinguiſhed by his marriage with Marguerite D'Almont, a young lady of great merit and fortune, and a native of Avignon.

"A long period of ſuſpenſe was now at an end, and left me in a ſtate almoſt as full of anguiſh as that which our firſt ſeparation produced. My ſorrows were increaſed by my mother's death; and this incident freeing me from thoſe reſtraints upon my motions which before exiſted, I determined to come to America.

"My ſon was now eight years old, and his grandfather claiming the province of his inſtruction, I was perſuaded to part with him, that he might be ſent to a diſtant ſchool. Thus was another tie removed; and, in ſpite of the well-meant importunities of my friends, I perſiſted in my ſcheme of croſſing the ocean."——

I could not help, at this part of her narration, expreſſing my ſurpriſe that any motives

motives were ſtrong enough to recommend this ſcheme.——

" It was certainly a freak of deſpair. A few months would, perhaps, have allayed the freſh grief, and reconciled me to my ſituation; but I would not pauſe or deliberate. My ſcheme was oppoſed by my friends with great earneſtneſs. During my voyage, affrighted by the dangers which ſurrounded me, and to which I was wholly unuſed, I heartily repented of my reſolution; but now methinks I have reaſon to rejoice at my perſeverance. I have come into a ſcene and ſociety ſo new—I have had ſo many claims made upon my ingenuity and fortitude, that my mind has been diverted in ſome degree from former ſorrows. There are even times when I wholly forget them, and catch myſelf indulging in cheerful reveries.

" I have often reflected with ſurpriſe on the nature of my own mind. It is eight years ſince my father's violent death. How few of my hours, ſince that period, have been

bleſſed with ſerenity! How many nights and days, in hateful and lingering ſucceſſion, have been bathed in tears, and tormented with regrets! That I am ſtill alive with ſo many cauſes of death, and with ſuch a ſlow conſuming malady, is ſurely to be wondered at!

"I believe the worſt foes of man, at leaſt of men in grief, are ſolitude and idleneſs. The ſame eternally occurring round of objects feeds his diſeaſe, and the effects of mere vacancy and uniformity are ſometimes miſtaken for thoſe of grief. Yes, I am glad I came to America. My relations are importunate for my return, and, till lately, I had ſome thoughts of it; but I think now I ſhall ſtay where I am for the reſt of my days.

"Since I arrived, I am become more of a ſtudent than I uſed to be. I always loved literature, but never till of late had a mind enough at eaſe to read with advantage. I now find pleaſure in the occupation which I never expected to find.

"You ſee in what manner I live. The letters which I brought ſecured me a flat-

tering reception from the beſt people in your country; but ſcenes of gay reſort had nothing to attract me, and I quickly withdrew to that ſecluſion in which you now find me. Here, always at leiſure, and miſtreſs of every laudable mean of gratification, I am not without the belief of ſerene days yet to come."

I now ventured to enquire what were her lateſt tidings of her huſband.

"At the opening of the Revolution I told you he became a champion of the people. By his zeal and his efforts, he acquired ſuch importance as to be deputed to the National Aſſembly. In this poſt he was the adherent of violent meaſures till the ſubverſion of monarchy; and then, when too late for his ſafety, he checked his career."

"And what has ſince become of him?"

She ſighed deeply.—"You were yeſterday reading a liſt of the proſcribed under Robeſpierre. I checked you. I had good reaſon. But this ſubject grows too painful; let us change it."

Some

Some time after I ventured to renew this topic, and diſcovered that Fielding, under his new name of Perrin D'Almont, was among the outlawed Deputies of laſt year, and had been ſlain in reſiſting the officers ſent to arreſt him. My friend had been informed that his *wife*, Philippine D'Almont, whom ſhe had reaſon to believe a woman of great merit, had eluded perſecution, and taken refuge in ſome part of America. She had made various attempts, but in vain, to find out her retreat.

"Ah!" ſaid I, "you muſt commiſſion me to find her. I will hunt her through the continent from Penobſcot to Savannah. I will not leave a nook unſearched."

CHAP. XV.

HOPE AND FEAR.

NONE will be ſurpriſed that, to a woman thus unfortunate and thus deſerving, my heart willingly rendered up all its ſympathies —that, as I partook of all her grief, I hailed with equal delight thoſe omens of felicity which now at length ſeemed to play in her fancy.

I ſaw her often, as often as my engagements would permit, and oftener than I allowed myſelf to viſit any other. In this I was partly ſelfiſh; ſo much entertainment, ſo much of the beſt inſtruction, did her converſation

verſation afford me, that I never had enough of it.

Her experience had been ſo much larger than mine, and ſo wholly different, and ſhe poſſeſſed ſuch unbounded facility of recounting all ſhe had ſeen and felt, and abſolute ſincerity and unreſerve in this reſpect were ſo fully eſtabliſhed between us, that I can imagine nothing equally inſtructive and delightful with her converſation.

Books are cold, jejune, vexatious in their ſparingneſs of information at one time, and their impertinent loquacity at another. Beſides, all they chuſe to give, they give at once; they allow no queſtions, offer no further explanations, and bend not to the caprices of our curioſity. They talk to us behind a ſcreen. Their tone is lifeleſs and monotonous. They charm not our attention by mute ſignificances of geſture and looks. They ſpread no light upon their meaning by cadences, and emphaſis, and pauſe.

How different was Mrs. Fielding's diſcourſe! So verſatile—ſo bending to the changes of occaſion—ſo obſequious to my curioſity, and ſo abundant in that very knowledge in which I was moſt deficient, and on which I ſet the moſt value—the knowledge of the human heart—of ſociety as it exiſted in another world, more abundant in the varieties of cuſtoms and characters, than I had ever had the power to witneſs.

Partly ſelfiſh I have ſaid my motives were, but not wholly ſo, as long as I ſaw that my friend derived pleaſure, in her turn, from my company. Not that I could add directly to her knowledge or pleaſure; but that expanſion of heart, that eaſe of utterance, and flow of ideas which always were occaſioned by my approach, were ſources of true pleaſure, of which ſhe had been long deprived, and for which her privation had given her a higher reliſh than ever.

She lived in great affluence and independence, but made uſe of her privileges of fortune chiefly to ſecure to herſelf the command of

of her own time. She had been long ago tired and diſguſted with the dull and ſulſome uniformity and parade of the playhouſe and ball-room. Formal viſits were endured as mortifications and penances, by which the delights of privacy and friendly intercourſe were by contraſt increaſed. Muſic ſhe loved, but never ſought it in a place of public reſort, or from the ſkill of mercenary performers; and books were not the leaſt of her pleaſures.

As to me, I was wax in her hand. Without deſign, and without effort, I was always of that form ſhe wiſhed me to aſſume. My own happineſs became a ſecondary paſſion, and her gratification the great end of my being. When with her, I thought not of myſelf. I had ſcarcely a ſeparate or independent exiſtence, ſince my ſenſes were occupied by her, and my mind was full of thoſe ideas which her diſcourſe communicated. To meditate on her looks and words, and to purſue the means ſuggeſted by my own

thoughts, or by her, conducive in any way to her good, was all my buſineſs.

"What a fate," ſaid I, at the concluſion of one of our interviews, "has been your's! But, thank Heaven, the ſtorm has diſappeared before the age of ſenſibility has gone paſt, and without drying up every ſource of happineſs! You are ſtill young—all your powers unimpaired—rich in the compaſſion and eſteem of the world—wholly independent of the claims and caprices of others—amply ſupplied with that mean of uſefulneſs called money—wiſe in that experience which only adverſity can give. Paſt evils and ſufferings—if incurred and endured without guilt, if called to view without remorſe, make up the materials of preſent joy; they cheer our moſt dreary hours with the whiſpered accents of 'Well done!' and they heighten our pleaſures into ſomewhat of celeſtial brilliancy, by furniſhing a deep, a ruefully deep contraſt.

"From this moment I will ceaſe to weep for

for you. I will call you the happieſt of women; I will ſhare with you your happineſs by witneſſing it; but that ſhall not content me. I muſt ſome way contribute to it. Tell me how I ſhall ſerve you! What can I do to make you happier? Poor am I in every thing but zeal; but ſtill I may do ſomething. What—pray tell me what can I do?"

She looked at me with ſweet and ſolemn ſignificance. What it was exactly, I could not divine; yet I was ſtrangely affected by it. It was but a glance inſtantly withdrawn. She made me no anſwer.

"You muſt not be ſilent—you *muſt* tell me what I can do for you. Hitherto I have done nothing. All the ſervice is on your ſide. Your converſation has been my ſtudy—a delightful ſtudy; but the profit has only been mine. Tell me how I can be grateful—my voice and manner, I believe, ſeldom belie my feelings!"

At this time I had almoſt done what a ſecond thought made me ſuſpect to be unauthorized; yet I cannot tell why: my

heart had nothing in it but reverence and admiration. Was ſhe not the ſubſtitute of my loſt mother? Would I not have claſped that beloved ſhade? Yet the two beings were not juſt the ſame, or I ſhould not, as now, have checked myſelf, and only preſſed her hand to my lips.

"Tell me," repeated I, "what can I do to ſerve you? I read to you a little now, and you are pleaſed with my reading; I copy for you when you want the time; I guide the reins for you when you chuſe to ride: —humble offices indeed, though perhaps all that a raw youth like me can do for you; but I can be ſtill more aſſiduous. I can read ſeveral hours in the day inſtead of one; I can write ten times as much as now.

"Are you not my loſt mother come back again? And yet not *exactly* her, I think. Something different—ſomething better, I believe, if that be poſſible. At any rate, methinks I would be wholly your's. I ſhall be impatient and uneaſy till every act, every thought,

thought, every minute, ſome way does you good.

"How!" ſaid I—her eye, ſtill averted, ſeemed to hold back the tear with difficulty, and ſhe made a motion as if to riſe—"have I grieved you? Have I been importunate? Forgive me if I have offended you!"

Her eyes now overflowed without reſtraint. She articulated with difficulty—"Tears are too prompt with me of late! But they did not upbraid you. Pain has often cauſed them to flow; but now it—is—*pleaſure.*"

"What a heart muſt your's be!" I reſumed. "When ſuſceptible of ſuch pleaſures, what pangs muſt formerly have rent it?—But you are not diſpleaſed, you ſay, with my importunate zeal; you will accept me as your own in every thing. Direct me—preſcribe to me. There muſt be *ſomething* in which I can be of ſtill more uſe to you—ſome way in which I can be wholly your's!"

"*Wholly mine!*" ſhe repeated, in a ſmothered voice, and riſing.—"Leave me,

Arthur! It is too late for you to be here. It was wrong to ſtay ſo late."

"I have been wrong; but how too late? I entered but this moment. It is twilight ſtill—is it not?"

"No—it is almoſt twelve. You have been here a long four hours—ſhort ones, I would rather ſay; but indeed you muſt go!"

"What made me ſo thoughtleſs of the time? But I will go; yet not till you forgive me!"

I approached her with a confidence, and for a purpoſe at which, upon reflection, I am not a little ſurpriſed; but the being called Mervyn, is not the ſame in her company and in that of another. What is the difference, and whence comes it? Her words and looks engroſs me. My mind wants room for any other object. But why enquire whence the difference? The ſuperiority of her merits and attractions to all thoſe whom I knew, would ſurely account for my fervour. Indifference, if I felt it, would be the only juſt occaſion of wonder.

The

The hour was indeed too late, and I haſtened home. Stevens was waiting my return with ſome anxiety. I apologized for my delay, and recounted to him what had juſt paſſed. He liſtened with more than uſual intereſt. When I had finiſhed—

"Mervyn," ſaid he, "you ſeem not to be aware of your preſent ſituation. From what you now tell me, and from what you have formerly told me, one thing ſeems very plain to me."

"Prithee, what is it?"

"Eliza Hadwin—do you wiſh—could you bear to ſee her the wife of another?"

"Five years hence I will anſwer you. Then my anſwer may be—'No; I wiſh her only to be mine.'—Till then, I wiſh her only to be my pupil, my ward, my ſiſter."

"But theſe are remote conſiderations—they are bars to marriage, but not to love. Would it not moleſt and diſquiet you to obſerve in her a paſſion for another?"

"It would; but only on her own account—not on mine. At a ſuitable age it is very likely

likely I may love her; becauſe it is likely, if ſhe holds on in her preſent career, ſhe will then be worthy. But at preſent, though I would die to enſure her happineſs, I have no wiſh to enſure it by marriage with her."

"Is there no other whom you love?"

"No. There is one worthier than all others—one whom I wiſh the woman who ſhall be my wife, to reſemble in all things."

"And who is this model?"

"You know I can only mean Achſa Fielding."

"If you love her likeneſs, why not love herſelf?"

I felt my heart leap.—"What a thought is that? Love her I *do*, as I love my God—as I love virtue. To love her in another ſenſe, would brand me for a lunatic."

"To love her as a woman, then, appears to you an act of folly."

"In me it would be worſe than folly. 'Twould be frenzy!"

"And why?"

"Why!

"Why!—Really, my friend, you aſtoniſh me. Nay, you ſtartle me; for a queſtion like that implies a doubt in you whether I have not actually harboured the thought."

"No," ſaid he, ſmiling, "preſumptuous though you be, you have not, to be ſure, reached ſo high a pitch. But ſtill, though I think you innocent of ſo heinous an offence, there is no harm in aſking why you might not love her, and even ſeek her for a wife."

"Achſa Fielding *my wife!* Good Heaven!"—The very ſound threw my ſoul into unconquerable tumults.—"Take care, my friend," continued I, in beſeeching accents; "you may do me more injury than you conceive, by even ſtarting ſuch a thought."

"True," ſaid he, "as long as ſuch obſtacles exiſt to your ſucceſs—ſo many incurable objections: for inſtance, ſhe is ſix years older than you."

"That is an advantage. Her age is what it ought to be."

"But ſhe has been a wife and a mother already."

"That

" That is likewiſe an advantage. She has wiſdom, becauſe ſhe has experience. Her ſenſibilities are ſtronger, becauſe they have been exerciſed and chaſtened. Her firſt marriage was unfortunate; the purer is the felicity ſhe will taſte in a ſecond! If her ſecond choice be propitious, the greater her tenderneſs and gratitude."

" But ſhe is a foreigner; independent of controul, and rich."

" All which are bleſſings to herſelf and to him for whom her hand is reſerved; eſpecially if, like me, he is indigent."

" But then ſhe is unſightly as a *night-hag*, tawney as a Moor, the eye of a Gipſy, low in ſtature, contemptibly diminutive, ſcarcely bulk enough to caſt a ſhadow as ſhe walks, leſs luxuriance than a charred log, fewer elaſticities than a ſheet pebble!"

" Huſh! huſh! blaſphemer!" and I put my hand before his mouth—" have I not told you that in mind, perſon, and condition ſhe is the type after which my enamoured fancy has modelled my wife?"

" Oh,

"Oh, ho! Then the objection does not lie with you: it lies with her, it ſeems. She can find nothing in you to eſteem! And pray, for what faults do you think ſhe would reject you?"

"I cannot tell. That ſhe can ever balance for a moment on ſuch a queſtion, is incredible. *Me! me!* That Achſa Fielding ſhould think of me!"

"Incredible indeed! You who are loathſome in your perſon, an idiot in your underſtanding, a villain in your morals! deformed! withered! vain, ſtupid, and malignant!—that ſuch an one ſhould chuſe *you* for an idol!"

"Pray, my friend," ſaid I, anxiouſly, "jeſt not. What mean you by a hint of this kind?"

"I will not jeſt then, but will ſoberly enquire, what faults are they which make this lady's choice of you ſo incredible? You are younger than ſhe, though no one who merely obſerved your manners, and heard you talk, would take you to be under thirty.

thirty. You are poor. Are theſe impediments?"

"I ſhould think not. I have heard her reaſon with admirable eloquence againſt the vain diſtinctions of property, and nation, and rank. They were once of moment in her eyes; but the ſufferings, humiliations, and reflections of years have cured her of the folly. Her nation has ſuffered too much by the inhuman antipathies of religious and political faction; ſhe herſelf has felt ſo often the contumelies of the rich, the high-born, and the bigotted, that——"

"Prithee then, what doſt imagine her objections to be?"

"Why, I don't know. The thought was ſo aſpiring; to call her *my wife* was an height of bliſs, the very diſtant view of which made my head dizzy."

"An height, however, to attain which you ſuppoſe only her conſent, her love to be neceſſary?"

"Without doubt, her love is indiſpenſable."

"Sit

"Sit down, Arthur, and let us no longer treat this matter lightly. I clearly ſee the importance of this moment to this lady's happineſs and your's. It is plain that you love this woman. How could you help it? A brilliant ſkin is not her's, nor elegant proportions, nor majeſtic ſtature; yet no creature had ever more power to bewitch. Her manners have grace and dignity that flow from exquiſite feeling, delicate taſte, and the quickeſt and keeneſt penetration. She has the wiſdom of men and of books. Her ſympathies are enforced by reaſon, and her charities regulated by knowledge. She has a woman's age, fortune more than you wiſh, and a ſpotleſs fame. How could you fail to love her? *You*, who are her choſen friend, who partake her pleaſures, and ſhare her employments, on whom ſhe almoſt excluſively beſtows her ſociety and confidence, and to whom ſhe thus affords the ſtrongeſt of all indirect proofs of impaſſioned eſteem—how could you, with all that firmneſs to love,

love, joined with all that diſcernment of her excellence—how could you eſcape the enchantment? You have not thought of marriage; you have not ſuſpected your love. From the purity of your mind, from the idolatry with which this woman has inſpired you, you have imaged no delight beyond that of enjoying her ſociety as you now do, and have never foſtered a hope beyond this privilege. How quickly would this tranquillity vaniſh, and the true ſtate of your heart be evinced, if a rival ſhould enter the ſcene, and be entertained with preference! Then would the ſeal be removed, the ſpell be broken, and you would awaken to terror and to anguiſh. Of this, however, there is no danger. Your paſſion is not felt by you alone. From her treatment of you, your diffidence diſables you from ſeeing; but nothing can be clearer to me than that ſhe loves you."

I ſtarted on my feet. A fluſh of ſcorching heat flowed to every part of my frame. My temples

temples began to throb like my heart. I was half delirious, and my delirium was ſtrangely compounded of fear and hope, of delight and terror.

"What have you done, my friend? You have overturned my peace of mind. Till now the image of this woman has been followed by complacency and ſober rapture; but your words have daſhed the ſcene with diſmay and confuſion. You have raiſed up wiſhes, and dreams, and doubts, which poſſeſs me in ſpite of my reaſon, in ſpite of a thouſand proofs. Good God! You ſay ſhe loves.—Love *me!* me, a boy in age, bred in clowniſh ignorance, ſcarcely uſhered into the world, more than childiſhly unlearned and raw, a barn-door ſimpleton—a plough-tail, kitchen-hearth, turnip-hoeing novice! She, thus ſplendidly endowed, thus allied to Nobles, thus gifted with arts, and adorned with graces, that ſhe ſhould chuſe me—me for the partner of her fortune, her affections, and her life! It cannot be. Yet, if it were;

if your gueſſes ſhould—prove——Oaf! madman! To indulge ſo fatal a chimera—ſo raſh a dream!—My friend! my friend! I feel that you have done me an irreparable injury. I can never more look her in the face. I can never more frequent her ſociety. Theſe new thoughts will beſet and torment me. My diſquiet will chain up my tongue. That overflowing gratitude, that innocent joy, unconſcious of offence, and knowing no reſtraint, which have hitherto been my titles to her favour, will fly from my features and manners. I ſhall be anxious, vacant, and unhappy in her preſence. I ſhall dread to look at her, or to open my lips, leſt my mad and unhallowed ambition ſhould betray itſelf."

"Well," replied Stevens, "this ſcene is quite new. I could almoſt find it in my heart to pity you. I did not expect this; and yet, from my knowledge of your character, I ought perhaps to have foreſeen it. This is a neceſſary part of the drama.

A joyous

A joyous certainty on theſe occaſions muſt always be preceded by ſuſpenſes and doubts; and the cloſe will be joyous in proportion as the preludes are excruciating. Go to bed, my good friend, and think of this. Time, and a few more interviews with Mrs. Fielding will, I doubt not, ſet all to rights."

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

A DREAM AND DISCOVERY.

I WENT to my chamber; but what different ſenſations did I carry into it from thoſe with which I had left it a few hours before. I ſtretched myſelf on the mattreſs, and put out the light; but the ſwarm of new images that ruſhed on my mind ſet me again inſtantly in motion. All was rapid, vague, and undefined, wearying and diſtracting my attention. I was rouſed as by a divine voice, that ſaid—"Sleep no more: Mervyn ſhall ſleep no more."

What chiefly occupied me was a nameleſs

ſort

sort of terror. What shall I compare it to? Methinks, that one falling from a tree overhanging a torrent, plunged into the whirling eddy, and gasping and struggling while he sinks to rise no more, would feel just as I did then. Nay, some such image actually possessed me. Such was one of my reveries, in which suddenly I stretched my hand, and caught the arm of a chair. This act called me back to reason, or rather gave my soul opportunity to roam into a new track equally wild.

Was it the abruptness of this vision that thus confounded me? Was it a latent error in my moral constitution, which this new conjuncture drew forth into influence? These were all the tokens of a mind lost to itself, bewildered, unhinged, plunged into a drear insanity.

Nothing less could have prompted so fantastically; for, midnight as it was, my chamber's solitude was not to be supported. After a few turns across the floor, I left the room and the house. I walked without

design, and in a hurried pace. I posted straight to the house of Mrs. Fielding. I lifted the latch, but the door did not open. It was no doubt locked.

"How comes this?" said I, and looked around me. The hour and occasion were unthought of. Habituated to this path, I had taken it spontaneously.—"How comes this?" repeated I. "Locked upon *me!* But I will summon them, I warrant me;—and rung the bell, not timidly or slightly, but with violence.

Some one hastened from above. I saw the glimmer of a candle through the key-hole.

"Strange," thought I, "a candle at noonday!"

The door was opened, and my poor Eliza, robed in a careless and a hasty manner, appeared. She started at sight of me, but merely because she did not in a moment recognise me.—"Ah, Arthur, is it you? Come in. My mamma has wanted you these

theſe two hours. I was juſt going to diſpatch Philip to tell you to come."

"Lead me to her," ſaid I.

She led the way into the parlour.—"Wait a moment here: I will tell her you are come;" and ſhe tripped away.

Preſently a ſtep was heard. The door opened again, and then entered a man. He was tall, elegant, ſedate to a degree of ſadneſs—ſomething in his dreſs and aſpect that beſpoke the foreigner—the Frenchman.

"What," ſaid he, mildly, "is your buſineſs with my wife? She cannot ſee you inſtantly, and has ſent me to receive your commands!"

"Your *wife!*—I want Mrs. Fielding."

"True, and Mrs. Fielding is my wife. Thank Heaven I have come in time to diſcover her, and claim her as ſuch."

I ſtarted back. I ſhuddered. My joints ſlackened, and I ſtretched my hand to catch ſomething by which I might be ſaved from ſinking on the floor. Meanwhile Fielding changed his countenance into rage and fury.

He called me villain, bade me avaunt, and drew a ſhining ſteel from his boſom, with which he ſtabbed me to the heart. I ſunk upon the floor, and all, for a time, was darkneſs and oblivion! At length I returned as it were to life. I opened my eyes. The miſts diſappeared, and I found myſelf ſtretched upon the bed in my own chamber. I remembered the fatal blow I had received. I put my hand upon my breaſt, the ſpot where the dagger entered. There were no traces of a wound. All was perfect and entire. Some miracle had made me whole.

I raiſed myſelf up. I re-examined my body. All around me was huſhed, till a voice from the pavement below proclaimed that it was "paſt three o'clock."

"What," ſaid I, "has all this miſerable pageantry, this midnight wandering, and this ominous interview, been no more than—*a dream!*"

It may be proper to mention, in explanation of this ſcene, and to ſhew the thorough perturbation of my mind during this night,

intelligence

intelligence gained ſome days after from Eliza. She ſaid that about two o'clock on this night, ſhe was rouſed by a violent ringing of the bell. She was ſtartled by ſo unſeaſonable a ſummons. She ſlept in a chamber adjoining Mrs. Fielding's, and heſitated whether ſhe ſhould alarm her friend; but the ſummons not being repeated, ſhe had determined to forbear.

Added to this, was the report of Mrs. Stevens, who, on the ſame night, about half an hour after I and her huſband had retired, imagined that ſhe heard the ſtreet-door opened and ſhut; but this being followed by no other conſequence, ſhe ſuppoſed herſelf miſtaken. I have little doubt that, in my feveriſh and troubled ſleep, I actually went forth, poſted to the houſe of Mrs. Fielding, rung for admiſſion, and ſhortly after returned to my own apartment.

This confuſion of mind was ſomewhat allayed by the return of light. It gave way to more uniform, but not leſs rueful and deſpondent perceptions. The image of

Achſa filled my fancy; but it was the harbinger of nothing but humiliation and ſorrow. To outroot the conviction of my own unworthineſs, to perſuade myſelf that I was regarded with the tenderneſs that Stevens had aſcribed to her, that the diſcovery of my thoughts would not excite her anger and grief, I felt to be impoſſible.

In this ſtate of mind I could not ſee her. To declare my feelings would produce indignation and anguiſh; to hide them from her ſcrutiny was not in my power: yet what would ſhe think of my eſtranging myſelf from her ſociety? What expedient could I honeſtly adopt to juſtify my abſence, and what employments could I ſubſtitute for thoſe precious hours hitherto devoted to her?

"*This* afternoon," thought I, "ſhe has been invited to ſpend at Stedman's country-houſe on Schuylkill. She conſented to go, and I was to accompany her. I am fit only for ſolitude. My behaviour in her preſence will be enigmatical, capricious, and moroſe.

I muſt

I muſt not go. Yet what will ſhe think of my failure? Not to go will be injurious and ſuſpicious."

I was undetermined. The appointed hour arrived. I ſtood at my chamber window, torn by variety of purpoſes, and ſwayed alternately by repugnant arguments. I ſeveral times went to the door of my apartment, and put my foot upon the firſt ſtep of the ſtaircaſe; but as often pauſed, reconſidered, and returned to my room.

In theſe fluctuations the hour paſſed. No meſſenger arrived from Mrs. Fielding, enquiring into the cauſe of my delay. Was ſhe offended at my negligence? Was ſhe ſick and diſabled from going, or had ſhe changed her mind? I now remember her parting words at our laſt interview. Were they not ſuſceptible of two conſtructions? She ſaid my viſit was too long, and bade me begone. Did ſhe ſuſpect my preſumption, and is ſhe determined thus to puniſh me?"

This terror added anew to all my former anxieties. It was impoſſible to reſt in this

ſuſpenſe. I would go to her. I would lay before her all the anguiſh of my heart: I would not ſpare myſelf. She ſhall not reproach me more ſeverely than I will reproach myſelf. I will hear my ſentence from her own lips, and promiſe unlimited ſubmiſſion to the doom of ſeparation and exile, which ſhe will pronounce.

I went forthwith to her houſe. The drawing-room and ſummer-houſe were empty. I ſummoned Philip, the footman.—His miſtreſs was gone to Mr. Stedman's.

"How! To Stedman's? In whoſe company?"

"Miſs Stedman and her brother called for her in the carriage, and perſuaded her to go with them."

Now my heart ſunk indeed! Miſs Stedman's *brother!* A youth, forward, gallant, and gay! Fluſhed with proſperity, and juſt returned from Europe, with all the confidence of age, and all the ornaments of education! She has gone with him, though pre-

engaged

engaged to me! Poor Arthur, how art thou deſpiſed!

This information only heightened my impatience. I went away, but returned in the evening. I waited till eleven, but ſhe came not back. I cannot juſtly paint the interval that paſſed till next morning. It was void of ſleep. On leaving her houſe I wandered into the fields. Every moment increaſed my impatience.—"She will probably ſpend the morrow at Stedman's," ſaid I, "and poſſibly the next day. Why ſhould I wait for her return? Why not ſeek her there, and rid myſelf at once of this agonizing ſuſpenſe? Why not go thither now? This night, wherever I ſpend it, will be unacquainted with repoſe. I will go; it is already near twelve, and the diſtance is more than eight miles. I will hover near the houſe till morning, and then, as early as poſſible, demand an interview."

I was well acquainted with Stedman's villa, having formerly been there with Mrs. Fielding. I quickly entered its precincts.

I went cloſe to the houſe, and looked mournfully at every window. At one of them a light was to be ſeen, and I took various ſtations to diſcover, if poſſible, the perſons within. Methought once I caught a glimpſe of a female, whom my fancy eaſily imagined to be Achſa. I ſat down upon the lawn, ſome hundred feet from the houſe, and oppoſite the window whence the light proceeded. I watched it, till at length ſome one came to the window, lifted it, and leaning on her arms, continued to look out.

The preceding day had been a very ſultry one; the night, as uſual after ſuch a day, and the fall of a violent ſhower, was delightfully ſerène and pleaſant. Where I ſat was enlightened by the moon. Whether ſhe ſaw me or not, I could hardly tell, or whether ſhe diſtinguiſhed any thing but a human figure.

Without reflecting on what was due to decorum and punctilio, I immediately drew near the houſe. I quickly perceived that her attention was fixed. Neither of us ſpoke, till I had placed myſelf directly under her;

her ; I then opened my lips, without knowing in what manner to addreſs her. She ſpoke firſt, and in a ſtartled and anxious voice, cried—" Who is that ?"

" Arthur Mervyn : he that was two days ago your friend."

" Mervyn ! What is it that brings you here at this hour ? What is the matter ? What has happened ? Is any body ſick ?"

" All is ſafe—all are in good health."

" What then do you come hither for at ſuch an hour ?"

" I meant not to diſturb you. I meant not to be ſeen."

" Good Heavens ! how you frighten me ! What can be the reaſon of ſo ſtrange——"

" Be not alarmed. I meant to hover near the houſe till morning, that I might ſee you as early as poſſible."

" For what purpoſe ?"

" I will tell you when we meet, and let that be at five o'clock. The ſun will then be riſen ; in the cedar-grove under the bank ; till when farewell !"

Having ſaid this, I prevented all expoſtu-

lation by turning the angle of the houſe, and haſtening towards the ſhore of the river. I roved about the grove that I have mentioned. In one part of it are a ruſtic ſeat and table, ſhrouded by trees and ſhrubs, and an intervening eminence, from the view of thoſe in the houſe. This I deſigned to be the cloſing ſcene of my deſtiny.

Preſently I left this ſpot, and wandered upward through embarraſſed and obſcure paths, ſtarting forward or checking my pace, according as my wayward meditations governed me. Shall I deſcribe my thoughts? Impoſſible! It was certainly a temporary loſs of reaſon; nothing leſs than madneſs could lead me into ſuch devious tracts, drag me down to ſo hopeleſs, helpleſs, panicful a depth, and drag me down ſo ſuddenly, lay waſte, as at a ſignal, all my flouriſhing ſtructures, and reduce them in a moment to a ſcene of confuſion and horror.

What did I fear? What did I hope? What did I deſign?—I cannot tell; my glooms were to retire with the night. The point to which every tumultuous feeling

was

was linked, was the coming interview with Achſa. That was the boundary of fluctuation and ſuſpenſe. Here was the ſealing and ratification of my doom.

I rent a paſſage through the thicket, and ſtruggled upward till I reached the edge of a conſiderable precipice. I laid me down at my length upon the rock, whoſe cold and hard ſurface I preſſed with my bared and throbbing breaſt. I leaned over the edge, fixed my eyes upon the water, and wept—plentifully; but why?

May *this* be my heart's laſt beat, if I can tell why!

I had wandered ſo far from Stedman's, that, when rouſed by the light, I had ſome miles to walk before I could reach the place of meeting. Achſa was already there. I ſlid down the rock above, and appeared before her. Well might ſhe be ſtartled at my wild and abrupt appearance.

I placed myſelf, without uttering a word, upon a ſeat oppoſite to her, the table between, and croſſing my arms upon the table, leaned my head upon them, while my face

was

was turned towards, and my eyes fixed upon her's. I ſeemed to have loſt the power and the inclination to ſpeak.

She regarded me at firſt with anxious curioſity. After examining my looks, every emotion was ſwallowed up in terrified ſorrow.

"For God's ſake! what does all this mean? Why am I called to this place? What tidings, what fearful tidings do you bring?"

I did not change my poſture, or ſpeak.

"What," ſhe reſumed, "could inſpire all this woe? Keep me not in this ſuſpenſe, Arthur! Theſe looks and this ſilence ſhock and afflict me too much!"

"Afflict you!" ſaid I at laſt. "I came to tell you what, now that I am here, I cannot tell."—There I ſtopped.

"Say what, I entreat you! You ſeem to be very unhappy—ſuch a change—from yeſterday!"

"Yes, from yeſterday! All then was joyous

a joyous calm; and now all is——but then I knew not my infamy, my guilt!"

"What words are theſe, and from you, Arthur! Guilt is to you impoſſible. If purity is to be found on earth, it is lodged in your heart. What have you done?"

"I have dared—how little you expect the extent of my daring! That ſuch as I ſhould look upwards with this ambition!"

I now ſtood up, and taking her hands in mine, as ſhe ſat, looked earneſtly in her face.—"I come only to beſeech your pardon—to tell you my crime, and then diſappear for ever. But firſt let me ſee if there be any omen of forgiveneſs. Your looks—they are kind, heavenly, compaſſionate ſtill. I will truſt them, I believe: and yet," letting go her hands, and turning away, "this offence is beyond the reach even of *your* mercy!"

"How beyond meaſure theſe words and this deportment diſtreſs me! Let me know the worſt—I cannot bear to be thus perplexed."

"Why,"

"Why," ſaid I, turning quickly round, and again taking her hands, "that Mervyn, whom you have honoured and confided in, and bleſſed with your ſweet regards, has been——"

"What has he been? Divinely amiable, heroic in his virtue, I am ſure! What elſe has he been?"

"This Mervyn has imagined, has dared ——Will you forgive him?"

"Forgive you what? Why don't you ſpeak? Keep not my ſoul in this ſuſpenſe!"

"He has dared——But do not think that I am he!—Continue to look as now, and reſerve your killing glances, the vengeance of thoſe eyes, as for one that is abſent.—— Why, what—you weep then at laſt! That is a propitious ſign. When pity drops from the eyes of our judge, then ſhould the ſuppliant approach. Now, in confidence of pardon, I will tell you.—This Mervyn, not content with all you have hitherto granted him, has dared—to *love* you—nay, to think of you as of *his wife!*"

Her

Her eyes ſunk beneath mine, and diſengaging her hands, ſhe covered her face with them.

"I ſee my fate," ſaid I, in a tone of deſpair. "Too well did I predict the effect of this confeſſion! But I will go—*and unforgiven!*"

She now partly uncovered her face. The hand, withdrawn from her cheek, was ſtretched towards me. She looked at me.

"Arthur, I *do* forgive thee!"

With what accents was this uttered! With what looks! The cheek that was before pale with terror, was now crimſoned over by a different emotion, and delight ſwam in her eyes.

Could I miſtake? My doubts, my newborn fears made me tremble while I took the offered hand.

"Surely," faltered I, "I am not—I cannot be ſo bleſſed!"

There was no need of words; the hand that I held, was ſufficiently eloquent. She was ſtill ſilent.

"Surely,'

"Surely," ſaid I, "my ſenſes deceive me! A bliſs like this cannot be reſerved for me! Tell me once more—ſet my doubting heart at reſt!"

She now gave herſelf to my arms.

"I have not words—let your own heart tell you, you have made your Achſa——"

At this moment a voice from without, it was Miſs Stedman's, called—"Mrs. Fielding, where are you?"

My friend ſtarted up, and in a haſty voice bade me begone.

"You muſt not be ſeen by this giddy girl. Come hither this evening, as if by my appointment, and I will return with you."

She left me in a kind of trance. I was immoveable. My reverie was too delicious! ——But let me not attempt the picture. If I can convey no image of my ſtate previous to this interview, my ſubſequent feelings are ſtill more beyond the reach of my powers to deſcribe.

Agreeably to the commands of my miſtreſs, I haſtened away, evading paths which

which might expoſe me to obſervation. I ſpeedily made my friends partake of my joy, and paſſed the day in a ſtate of ſolemn, but confuſed rapture. I did not accurately portray the various parts of my felicity. The whole ruſhed upon my ſoul at once. My conceptions were too rapid and too comprehenſive, to be diſtinct.

I went to Stedman's in the evening. I found in the accents and looks of my Achſa new aſſurances that all which had lately paſſed, was more than a dream. She made excuſes for leaving the Stedmans ſooner than ordinary, and was accompanied to the city by her friend. We dropped Mrs. Fielding at her own houſe; and thither, after accompanying Miſs Stedman home, I returned upon the wings of tremulous impatience.

Now could I repeat every word of every converſation that has ſince taken place between us; but why ſhould I do that on paper? Indeed it could not be done. All

is

is of equal value, and all could not be compriſed but in many volumes. There needs nothing more deeply to imprint it on my memory; and while thus reviewing the paſt, I ſhould be iniquitouſly neglecting the preſent. What is given to the pen, would be taken from her; and that indeed would be——But no need of ſaying what it would be, ſince it is impoſſible.

I merely write to allay theſe tumults which our neceſſary ſeparation produces—to aid me in calling up a little patience till the time arrives when our perſons, like our minds, ſhall be united for ever. That time may nothing happen to prevent!—But nothing can happen. But why this ominous miſgiving juſt now? My love has infected me with theſe unworthy terrors, for ſhe has them too.

This morning I was relating my dream to her. She ſtarted, and grew pale. A ſad ſilence enſued the cheerfulneſs that had reigned before.

"Why thus dejected, my friend?"

"I hate your dream. It is a horrid thought.

thought. Would to God it had never occurred to you!"

"Why ſurely you place no confidence in dreams!"

"I know not where to place confidence —not in my preſent promiſes of joy."—And ſhe wept.

I endeavoured to ſooth or conſole her. Why, I aſked, did ſhe weep.

"My heart is ſore. Former diſappointments were ſo heavy; the hopes which were blaſted were ſo like my preſent ones, that the dread of a like reſult will intrude upon my thoughts. And now your dream!—Indeed I know not what to do. I believe I ought ſtill to retract—ought, at leaſt, to poſtpone an act ſo irrevocable."

Now was I obliged again to go over my catalogue of arguments to induce her to confirm her propitious reſolution to be mine within the week. I at laſt ſucceeded even in reſtoring her ſerenity, and beguiling her fears, by dwelling on our future happineſs.

Our

Our houſehold, while we ſtaid in America—in a year or two we hie to Europe—ſhould be *thus* compoſed. Fidelity, and ſkill, and pure morals ſhould be ſought out and enticed by generous recompences, into our domeſtic ſervice. Duties ſhould be light and regular. Such and ſuch ſhould be our amuſements and employments abroad and at home; and would not this be true happineſs?

"Oh yes—if it may be ſo."

"It ſhall be ſo; but this is but the humble outline of the ſcene: ſomething is ſtill to be added to complete our felicity."

"What more can be added?"

"What more? Can Achſa aſk what more? She who has not been *only* a wife—"

But why am I indulging this pen-prattle? The hour the fixed for my return to her is come; and now take thyſelf away, quill. Lie there ſnug in thy leathern caſe till I call for thee, and that will not be very ſoon.

I believe

I believe I will abjure thy company till all is settled with my love. Yes: I *will* abjure thee!—so let *this* be thy last office, till Mervyn has been made the happiest of men!

FINIS.

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ON THE WRITINGS OF C. B. BROWN,

The American Novelist,

AUTHOR OF

JANE TALBOT, EDGAR HUNTLY, PHILIP STANLEY, ARTHUR MERVYN, &c.

From the New Monthly Magazine for December 1820.

THE reputation of an author is seldom justly proportioned to his merit. For the last seventeen years our circulating libraries have contained several novels by C. B. Brown, an American author, of whose existence we were ignorant (and this ignorance, we have reason to suspect, is pretty general) until an accident lately led us to the perusal of some of his works; yet if Wieland, or Arthur Mervyn, or Edgar Huntly, were now to be for the first time ushered into the world with some such magical addition as "by the Author of Waverley," in the titlepage, we doubt not that every reader would be in raptures with their beauties, and every babbling critic tendering his tributary stream of shallow admiration of the writer's powers. But it was the fate of those works, when first reprinted in this country, to share in the general contempt of those poor productions, which, like the redundant and needy members of a great house, have nothing but sounding titles to sustain them. The genius of the man certainly deserved a different destiny; and though he is now beyond the reach of human praise, we feel irresistibly impelled, "even in his grave, to do him justice." We believe that this sentiment is not exclusively confined to ourselves, and that ere long the public attention will be called to the same subject in more detail than our present limits can afford.

Brown's novels are of a very peculiar kind, and afford a singular

a singular example of the successful application of certain principles of effect, (manifestly borrowed from a distinguished writer of our own country), by which our attention is at the outset powerfully raised, and our sympathy, during the entire progress of the work, intensely fixed upon persons who are rendered interesting, not so much from their individual qualifications, as from the strange situations in which a fatal series of untoward accidents has involved them. This mode of arresting the reader's interest and curiosity is more or less adopted in every work of fiction; but the first time that it was systematically employed as the mainspring of the interest—as the general pervading principle of the whole—was (as far as our knowledge of such productions extends) in Godwin's Adventures of Caleb Williams; and we are far from meaning to detract from the author's originality, when we express our opinion, that the artifice in question was not resorted to in consequence of any previous design, but suggested itself, in the course of the details, as an obvious and indeed almost inevitable inference from the more comprehensive moral and political purpose of his work.

The subject-matter of Brown's novels is indeed widely different from that of the author we have mentioned, as is also their philosophical tendency: still, not only has the American made use of the same modes of chaining down the reader's attention, and of harassing him with every passion that agitated the fictitious personages, so successfully adopted by Godwin; but he has caught the tone and style of his model, even in the minutest peculiarities, with a spirit and accuracy that really looks more like identity than imitation. We must, however, add that this imitation (though inveterately persevered in throughout) is managed with all the ease, and skill, and copiousness of an original manner. Certainly the English seed has not degenerated in the foreign soil on which it has fallen. We

should rather say, that in its transplanted growth it displays much of that bursting energy of vegetation, and often expands into all that Transatlantic wildness and profusion, which we associate with the productions of the younger hemisphere. But what renders Brown the most singular and original of imitators, is, that notwithstanding his pertinacious predilection for the phraseology and manner of another, he has, in no instance, betrayed any disposition to adopt that person's speculative views of human affairs. He appears to have instinctively seized the secret of Godwin's power, and to have used it as freely and familiarly as if he were the rightful owner; but the views and purposes to which he has applied it, have not the remotest connexion with those of which it was originally made the vehicle—so that, looking at those novels in this single point of view, and without any reference to their more general merits, we cannot help pronouncing them to be a very singular literary curiosity. They are, besides, almost the only American productions of the kind with which we are acquainted; and as nearly all the personages and events are American, we have considered them as so many experimental specimens of its native materials for fictitious composition; and in this view have found in their perusal a peculiar source of interest, which has probably been lost upon those more familiarly conversant with the habits and manners of American society.

Brown, however, (it should be remarked) does not profess to present any thing like a formal picture of the social peculiarities of his country. His characters are not introduced (like Smollet's and Fielding's) for their own sakes, as so many active, prominent, and bustling individuals, containing each a little world of human nature within himself—but appear rather as passive instruments powerfully operated upon by external circumstances, strange and perplexing in the extreme, from the resistless influence of which

which on their thoughts and conduct the main interest of the situations is made to arise. In Brown's personages there is little previous adaptation of condition and temperament. They have nothing of that restless spirit of adventure that would naturally predestine them to be actors in the particular scenes they are called upon to witness, but they are as so many mirrors from which we see, most strikingly reflected, the groups of mysterious and shadowy forms with which the author's imagination has enveloped them. His heroes, on the whole, are rather ordinary beings, whom some accident suddenly plunges into difficulties and perplexities, that awaken all their faculties, while they baffle their comprehension; and the plot and mystery thickening around them with each successive effort to extricate themselves, they thus become raised into objects of our intensest sympathy, from their connexion with the scenes of dark enchantment through which they are made to move: still, though the display of individual character seems to have formed so small a part of this author's plans, he has almost unconsciously scattered over his portraits many distinctive traits, that sufficiently point out the country of the writer, and of the subjects of his fictions. In the language and conduct of Edgar Huntly and Arthur Mervyn there is a certain colonial cast of frankness, frugality, and intelligent simplicity, mixed up with habits of steady, unostentatious benevolence, and patient self-denial, betokening the American notions of the qualities best befitting the youth of their republic; while, in the occasional decision and physical energy that they display, we recognise the importance annexed to those more masculine attributes, by which the gigantic infant is destined one day to ascend to the heights of power and renown.

Whatever were Brown's defects in the construction of his stories, as a man of genius he has made great amends. We have seldom met with fictions having less the air of fictions.

tions. His imagination was in the midst of his scenes, and not an item is omitted that can authenticate their reality. Circumstance follows circumstance, strange and inexplicable, suspending our faculties in wonder or alarm; but in the midst of all the youthful buoyancy and intrepidity with which he plunges into his subjects, there is such a matter-of-fact earnestness, such an anxious enumeration of every the minutest fact or sentiment that could belong to each situation—so resistless is the body of circumstantial evidence adduced—that we find it impossible to withhold our implicit faith. For this reason, no separate extracts can convey a just notion of the author's powers. It is only by following him in all his details, that we can appreciate his extraordinary faculty of forming, frequently out of the most ordinary persons and transactions, such mysterious combinations as to give them all the grand and perplexing interest of supernatural occurrences. Upon the whole, to sum up our opinion of these novels, they contain no sentimental raptures—no fascinating pictures of love and gallantry; they have neither heroines nor heroes, properly so called—no poetic mendicants—no impassioned hags—no sublime marauders; they have few allusions, political, historical, religious, or literary; but with all these deficiencies, they are the first fruits of a young and powerful mind; they are full of life, and freshness, and enterprise—those "vital signs" by which works of genius will ever be distinguished; and although (as already stated) the author has condescended to borrow from another, yet what he has taken he has so felicitously applied and extended, developing, with extraordinary skill, throughout several volumes, all the latent resources of particular modes of producing fictitious interest, that we must add to his other merits that of decided originality.

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